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The international weekly heralding the coming of Mashiach
BEIS MOSHIACH

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WHY MATERIAL REWARDS MATTER

LIKKUTEI SICHOS VOL. 37, PG. 79-84
TRANSLATED BY BORUCH MERKUR



[Continued from last week]

3. However, at first glance, this explanation is somewhat difficult to accept, for the Torah portion of B'Chukosai – and so too with regard to all the Torah portions that discuss the promise of a reward for Mitzvos – was said to all the Jewish people, even to those who are at a lofty level in the service of G-d. And according to the latter explanation it would follow that this portion has no relevance to those who have an appreciation of spiritual reward, and obviously not to those whose service is “not on condition to receive a reward,” but only to one whose appreciation only extends to material benefits, and only that inspires him towards the fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvos.

Although the principal is that “Torah speaks to the majority,” it is more logical to elucidate in a manner that is relevant to everyone. Moreover, certainly there is a lesson in it also for the minority.

Furthermore, in explaining the verse, “If you shall go in [the way of] My statutes and guard My Mitzvos and perform them,” our Sages comment (cited in the commentary of Rashi) that it means, “to be **laboring** in Torah.” Not only that, but the laboring in Torah is on condition to guard and to fulfill. It comes out that this passage refers primarily to Torah study and Mitzva fulfillment in a way that surpasses what one is accustomed to, a lofty level of Torah study and the fulfillment of Mitzvos. Namely, study with toil, and likewise, observing and fulfilling [Mitzvos] with toil.

This is especially the case in light of the commentaries in texts regarding the meaning (by way of allusion) of “B'Chukosai” (in My statutes), which is etymologically related to the word “*chakika*” (engraved).

The message [derived from this linguistic link] being that Torah study and the fulfillment of Mitzvos here is not only in a manner of regular labor and toil, but in a manner that is “engraved,” that the Torah and Mitzvos are engraved in one’s heart and his entire being. This state resembles the advantage of engraved letters over written letters – that not only are engraved letters more unified with the stone from which they are carved out than written letters are with the parchment upon which they are written, but [in the case of an engraving] there is no other item than the stone in which the letters are engraved. That is to say that the Torah study that is alluded to here is not only in a manner that the person with the Torah are like two things that are joined together, but more so, the person is not [recognizable as] an existent. It is understood that with regard to such a person whose Torah study is in a manner of engraving also the Mitzvos that he fulfills are in this manner – they are permeated throughout his entire being.

From all of this it is understood that we are speaking about an extremely lofty level of Torah study and Mitzva fulfillment. Thus, it is obvious that nothing bears any relevance to such a person except for Torah and Mitzvos, definitely not material reward and promises. How then is it possible for a person at such a level in his service of G-d to be told that on account of the fact that “you shall go in [the way of] My statutes and guard My Mitzvos and perform them,” he shall receive the reward of, “I shall give your rains in their time, etc.,” and all the material promises regarding bodily matters, etc.?

4. We may assert that following resolution:

Regarding the Torah it says, “it is your **life** and the length of your days” [Nitzavim 30:20; Brachos 61b] –

not only does the Torah **bring** life to the person in this world and the World to Come, but it itself is the life of every single Jew. That is, concerning a Jewish person, Torah is not something additional to his existence, one among other aspects of his life, rather it is literally his essence and life. [FN 28: See Avoda Zara 3b, end (and see Brachos ibid; Zohar III 42a, 278b), "Just as fish in the sea, etc."]

Now, a person is [seen as being] composed of several sections. [FN 29: Regarding the following, see at length *Hemshech Rosh HaShana* 5663 (beginning); 5708 (Ch. 2, end ff.); words beginning with "Ashreinu" 5705, Ch. 1, end ff; among others.] In general: head, torso, legs. The head is the place where the lofty

Not only does the Torah bring life to the person in this world and the World to Come, but it itself is the life of every single Jew, literally his essence and life.

faculties reside: the intellect and etc., as well as the senses of sight and hearing, etc. The torso is the vessel and home for the emotional faculties and the like, which reside within it. Whereas, the legs only possess a single function: walking, which is the lowest function, for one cannot recognize in it the [distinct] virtue of man. All this is in terms of the various faculties of man. However, his essential spiritual vitality, which transcends the individual faculties, is found equally in the entire body, from his head to his feet [to the extent that, in this respect, everyone is equal (including everyone from regular people to Og King of Bashan), etc. – see FN 30].

[To be continued be"H]

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THE MESSAGE OF GEULA RASHBI SENT WITH THE DOVE

BY RABBI YOSEF KARASIK – DISTRICT RAV OF BAT CHEIFER, EMEK CHEIFER

*A shocking story of Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai (Rashbi) crying over the Exile and his separation from his students. * Hashem's pain over this. * Eliyahu HaNavi, emissary of the Sh'china. * Rashbi and his students want to know when the Geula will come. * A unique look at the rebuke in Parshas B'Chukosai and Ki Savo.*

PAIN AND TEARS IN THE BEIS MIDRASH

The Roman government imposed a death sentence on Rashbi for his outspoken comments denigrating the Romans who ruled over Eretz Yisroel at the time. Due to the decree, he ran away and hid in a cave in the desert of Lud for thirteen years. A miracle occurred and a spring of water appeared in the cave and a carob tree sprouted forth (on Shabbos it turned into a date tree). These sustained Rashbi and his son Rebbi Elozor for thirteen years.

Throughout the entire thirteen

years, he and his son engaged exclusively in the study of Torah. Twice a day, Eliyahu would appear to Rashbi and teach him the secrets of the Torah.

Far away, in the Galil, his colleagues and students continued to study Torah, unaware of where their teacher was hiding.

One time, one of the Tanaim explained why the rebukes and curses appear in the Torah twice, in parshiyos B'Chukosai and Ki Savo. Namely, because they allude to two exiles of the Jewish people. The first, in B'Chukosai, alludes to the exile following the destruction of

the First Temple, and the second, in Ki Savo, alludes to the exile after the destruction of the Second Temple.

One of the Sages raised the following question. Why is it that the first set of curses in B'Chukosai ends with words of encouragement and the promise of redemption, whereas the curses in Ki Savo do not? Can it be that the need for encouragement existed only in the first exile, whereas now, in the current exile, we do not require such encouragement?

One of the Sages in the group, Rebbi Yehuda Ben Ilai was especially affected by the question. He groaned in pain and cried out, "Woe that Rashbi is not here, for only he could resolve this question and provide succor and relief for our souls in this bitter exile."

When Rebbi Yehuda's son, Rebbi Yossi, saw his father's pain over the bitter exile and the loss of Rashbi, he took an extraordinary step. He wrote down the question of the Sages, evoked one of the Divine Names and went out to the yard. When he saw a dove flying by, he called out, "Dove, Dove, you were a loyal messenger when sent by

Noach from the Ark to check out the water of the Flood. Now, once again, be a loyal messenger of the Sages of Israel and bring this note to Rashbi.”

The dove took the note in its mouth, flew to the cave of Rashbi, and deposited it in his cloak. Rashbi looked at the note and was pained. He broke out in tears, saying, “What will the last generations before the Geula do? Who will console them so they do not despair in exile?”

Hashem saw the tears of Rashbi and called to Eliyahu HaNavi, even though he was busy on another mission, and told him to go still the tears of Rashbi. “Even though I did not wish to reveal to any human being the secret of exile and redemption, now that I see the pain

and tears of Rashbi, I have changed my decision and am sending you to Rashbi. Reveal to him the secret of the matter and the tidings of the redemption.”

Eliyahu came to Rashbi and began to explain and reveal to him the secret of the Torah rebukes – that the First Temple was destroyed for lesser sins than the Second Temple. The Second Temple was destroyed because they transgressed the entire Torah, which is why the rebuke of Ki Savo contains fifty-three verses, alluding to the transgression of all fifty-three portions of the Torah. However, the destruction of the First Temple was due to transgressing only the hidden pathways of the Torah. Therefore in B’Chukosai there are only thirty-two verses, alluding to the thirty-two hidden pathways of the Torah.

Before Eliyahu HaNavi managed to reveal the secret allusion to the redemption found in the rebuke of Ki Savo, a powerful wind and a wheel of fire came and transported him up to the heavens. Once again, Rashbi broke out in bitter tears because he did not merit to hear the main point, namely, the end of the exile and the tidings of redemption, and he fell asleep in the doorway of the cave.

ELIYAHU REVEALS HIMSELF FOUR TIMES IN ONE DAY

Hashem saw the tears and suffering of Rashbi, and once again, He sent Eliyahu HaNavi to awaken him and reveal to him the hidden secrets. Apparently, this was the fourth time Eliyahu appeared to him on the same day – two more times in addition to the regular twice a day.

Eliyahu appeared at the mouth of the cave and called out to Rashbi: Wake up from your sleep. Fortunate is your lot that Hashem desires to honor you, in that I should reveal to

you the secret of the curses and the tidings of redemption.

Eliyahu went on to explain: All the words of rebuke are actually words of blessing and kindness. Although they appear to be curses, in truth they contain within them a deep and abiding love. Perhaps, they are painful and discomfiting, but their inner meaning is truly good and lofty, in a manner of “hidden kindnesses.”

An analogy to this would be a great king who is angered at his beloved son, who on occasion, even rebukes him and strikes him. Even while punishing his son, however, his love for him is very great and powerful. Superficially it might seem that the king does not love his son, but this is not true. He loves his son very much. Everything he does to him is done out of deep love and concern. Additionally, even the punishments and rebuke are essentially good and not bad.

So too, with Hashem and His curses and rebuke to His children, the Jewish people. The inner content and meaning contains promises and wonderful blessings, spoken out of awesome love and compassion for the children of Israel. A superficial reading of the text may sound like harsh and painful words, but through deeper analysis one reveals that they are good and gladdening words, containing lofty blessings.

HASHEM’S REBUKE: AN EXPRESSION OF LOVE AND GOOD TIDINGS

A few examples of curses and rebukes which are actually astounding blessings on a deeper level:

The harshest of all the curses is in the verse, “Also all illnesses and all plagues which are not written in this Book of Torah, Hashem will



"Herald of Redemption"

By artist Baruch Nachshon
(www.nachshonart.com)

raise (*ya'aleim*) them upon you until you are destroyed." This alludes to the blessing and promise that Hashem will cover and conceal (*yaalim*) all illnesses from the Jewish people. The continuation of the verse, "Until you are destroyed," means that to the end of all the generations, you will be protected from illness and plague.

The end of the curses is, "Hashem will return you to Egypt in ships, in the path that I said to you that you shall not see it again. And you will be sold there to your enemy for slaves and maidservants and there will be no purchaser." This is the blessing and promise that Hashem will return all Jews to Eretz Yisroel in "ships" and He will do great wonders and miracles as He did for our forefathers in Egypt. He will drown our enemies like at the Splitting of the Sea.

The "path" of Egypt alludes to the path of wonders and miracles, "that I said...you shall not see it again," but in the time of the Future Redemption, you will return to see the wonders and miracles. "As in the days of your going out of Egypt, I will show you wonders."

When will these miracles occur? They will happen when you think in your hearts that you have reached an all-time low. When you will be offered for sale to the gentile nations as slaves, then the miracles of redemption will come. All of this will transpire when the Jewish people will realize and have the sense to return in complete repentance.

WHERE DOES IT ALLUDE TO THE TIDINGS OF REDEMPTION?

Rashbi then asked Eliyahu HaNavi: Where in the verses of curses-blessings does it allude to the redemption of the Jewish people?

Eliyahu answered: In the verse, "And your life will be hanging opposite you and you will be afraid night and day, and you will not believe in your life." This alludes to the fact that the Sages of Israel will know when the "life" of Geula will come, but they are constantly afraid day and night, and it feels as though their "life" is "hanging." However, all the prophecies regarding redemption are solid and true.

In this manner, Eliyahu went on

One of the Sages in the group, Rabbi Yehuda Ben Ilai was especially affected by the question. He groaned in pain and cried out, "Woe that Rashbi is not here, for only he could resolve this question and provide succor and relief for our souls in this bitter exile."

to explain and reveal to Rashbi that all the curses are actually wondrous blessings.

Towards the end of the day, before nightfall, Eliyahu finished speaking, thus completing his mission. Rashbi sat down immediately and put it all in writing. Once again, the messenger dove, the loyal emissary, arrived and Rashbi put the note in its mouth. The dove flew off, and returned to the courtyard of the house of study

in the Galil.

The entire day, from when he sent off the note in the morning, Rabbi Yossi stood in yard with his eyes cast heavenward, awaiting the response of Rashbi. Towards evening, the dove arrived and brought the "note of tidings." Rabbi Yossi exclaimed over the dove, citing the verse, "And the dove came to him towards the time of evening, with a leaf torn off in her mouth."

"WOE TO US THAT WE DON'T KNOW THE PLACE OF OUR REBBE"

With great excitement, Rabbi Yossi took the note from the dove. He entered the Beis Midrash and showed it to all of his colleagues, telling them all that transpired. Every one of them was amazed.

Rabbi Yehuda, the father of Rabbi Yossi, cried and said, "Woe to us that we don't know the place of our Rebbe. However, wherever he is, he is protecting us. In actuality, all of the disciples are with him, being inspired by him and learning from him."

Rabbi Yehuda concluded, "Fortunate is the soul of Bar Yochai that Hashem performs miracles for him. He decrees and Hashem fulfills. In the future, he will be the head of all the righteous ones who sit in Gan Eden, to receive the countenance of the Sh'china and to see the Holy One Blessed Be He. He will delight with the tzaddikim and say to them, "Come, let us bow and kneel before Hashem, our Maker."

(Free translation of the story that appears in the Zohar; Zohar Chadash, Parshas Ki Savo p. 73.)

A LESSON TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

All of the personalities who are featured in this awesome story conducted themselves in an amazing

fashion, despite the great darkness of the bitter exile. Let's examine each one, following the story line, and try to draw the appropriate lessons for our time.

1 – THE TORAH SCHOLARS – They were left without their Rebbe for thirteen years. When did they begin crying out of great pain and suffering? After they considered the terrible exile and could not find consolation as to when it would end or when Moshiach would come. This is what caused their great pain and tears!

2 – REBBI YEHUDA BAR ILAI – His hiskashrus to his Rebbe, Rashbi, was extraordinary. He, more than his fellow students, is the one who felt and cried over the fact that their Rebbe is missing. He is also the one who expressed the words of encouragement and consolation, proclaiming that there was no need to worry, because our Rebbe is protecting us, even from a distance, and continues to influence us through his words of Torah.

Additionally, this exemplary example influenced his son, Rebbi Yossi, whose actions undoubtedly were inspired by the chinuch he received from his father.

3 – REBBI YOSSİ – His actions, which he did on his own initiative, seem strange and bizarre, in a manner of “lights of Tohu.” First, he wrote a note and put it in the mouth of a dove! Second, he stood and waited an entire day for the dove to return! Thirdly, he ran pell-mell into the study hall to tell everyone about his strange actions and the note that he received from Heaven!

However, it is specifically through those actions that Rebbi Yossi succeeded in effecting the revelation of the Sh'china, Eliyahu HaNavi, and the tidings of redemption.

4 – REBBI SHIMON BAR YOCHAI – He spent thirteen years hidden in a cave, closed off from the world without proper food and enduring much physical suffering, such as cracked skin sores, as related by the Sages. Yet, we do not find that he complained or cried, except in these two instances. He cried when he heard that his colleagues and disciples are suffering because they could not learn Torah from him, and he cried

Rebbi Yehuda, the father of Rebbi Yossi, cried and said, “Woe to us that we don’t know the place of our Rebbe. However, wherever he is, he is protecting us. In actuality, all of the disciples are with him, being inspired by him and learning from him.”

when searching for consolation for the last generations in exile.

5 – ELIYAHU HANAVI – Despite the wheel of flame, which prevented him from revealing the tidings of redemption, he returned a second time, at Hashem's command, to reveal the secret of redemption to Rashbi and raise the spirits of the Jewish people.

And above all:

6 – HASHEM HIMSELF – He changed His whole plan and decided to reveal the secret of redemption, sending Eliyahu twice, in order to lessen the suffering of the tzaddik, who was pained over the question: When will the Jewish people go out of exile?

ALL IN THE MERIT OF ONE DISCIPLE

All of the above transpired due to “arousal from below,” human effort.

The whole amazing sequence of events, Rashbi's pain and Hashem's directive to Eliyahu to visit him twice and reveal hidden secrets, which Hashem did not originally wish to reveal, all were the result of an “arousal from below,” namely, the pain of the Torah scholars over the rebuke and suffering of exile, and the letter of Rebbi Yossi.

When a Jew truly desires to connect to the tzaddik, he can merit to receive a response, even in a supernatural manner. However, there are two conditions. He must feel the pain of the situation and truly cry from the depth of his heart, and he has to believe, waiting in place for the good tidings to arrive.

As a footnote, it is worth clarifying a point that pertains to our generation:

The proclamation of the Rebbe Rayatz, “*L’Alter L’Geula*,” and the proclamations of the Rebbe, “*Higia Z’man Geulas’chem*” and “*Hinei Zeh Moshiach Ba*,” serve to preface the difficult times we are living through when we don't see the Rashbi of our generation, with words of encouragement and consolation. We must remember that we have been promised in countless sichos and farbrengens that our generation is the final generation of Galus and first generation of Geula. May it be immediately, NOW!

‘IT’S ABOUT SOMETHING MUCH BIGGER THAN YOU!’

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW BY BORUCH MERKUR
WRITTEN BY CHANA KATZ

Friday afternoon. Music superstar Matisyahu is being trailed by a reporter from one of America’s most prominent newspapers, *The Washington Post*. Erev Shabbos and the reporter is barely keeping pace with the Chassid as he navigates the streets of New York City.

The article is published with the headline, “Funny, He Doesn’t Look Jamaican!” referring to the reggae roots of his music. Still, the essence of the story is G-dliness. “Matisyahu does this (gives up Shabbos performances, etc.) because, as he sees it, he has what he had because he put G-d first,” she writes and then continues with a quote from Matisyahu, “That’s what real passion is, and that passion comes through a divorce of self. And the way to do that is to give your self over to something greater.”

AIN’T GONNA WORK ON SATURDAY

ABC television network host Jimmy Kimmel asks the audience to give a warm welcome to the “most popular Jewish rapper” whom they flew “all the way” from Brooklyn to the West Coast. The six-foot-four, 27-year-old singer, Chassidically-clothed from his blacks to his white tzitzis,

enters and immediately starts to sing a melody, “Dum, dum, dum, dum, dah, dah...” and then vocalizes a series of sounds that sizzle and explode into song.

The cameras occasionally flash on the crowd in the audience and no one is sitting still. Everyone is literally

moving in their seats, if you can imagine. The audience is ignited.

Matisyahu finishes, gives a shy but appreciative smile and is ushered into the interview seat. Taking in his Chasidic composure, the host asks with great interest, “How did you become this rapper?!”

Matisyahu smiles and says, “Basically, I wasn’t always religious. I was raised in a non-Orthodox Jewish family and listened to reggae like any high school kid.”

Host: “You get criticism from the Orthodox?”

Matisyahu: “Not so much. The Lubavitcher Rebbe said, ‘Go out and turn the world over,’ and you should try to help people connect to G-dliness.”

The host: “What sort of things can’t you do? Are there any restrictions?”

Matisyahu: “I can’t perform on Fridays,” he begins to answer, as the host interrupts and prods: “Even if it’s a really BIG gig?!”

Matisyahu: “No.”

All this is getting very interesting to one of the other stars on the show and he interjects: “One million? Two million?”

A SIGN THAT GEULA IS NEAR!

“The success of Matisyahu is nothing short of pure G-dliness and certainly the work of the Rebbe MH”M. He’s good. In fact, he’s really good, excellent. But that millions of non-Jews are crazy over him is a miracle and it seems clear that he knows it, which is a big chiddush. Another sign that Moshiach is here and Geula is near!”

—Rabbi Tuvia Bolton
mashpia Ohr T’mimim,
Kfar Chabad

A WHIRLWIND

“It’s been chaotic. Like a whirlwind. One minute you’re a bachur and the next you’re selling a half a million records.”

—Matisyahu Miller

“No,” Matisyahu says.

“Let me bump it up to four million,” he persists.

“Four million?!” Matisyahu responds, his eyes lighting up, playing along, and then says, quite clearly, “No!”

* * *

A few short years ago, it may have been difficult to distinguish Matisyahu from other baalei t’shuva whose thirsting, restless souls struggled through the pits and passions of life in search of meaning. He learned at Hadar HaTorah after his soul was ignited by N.Y. University shliach R. Dov Yona Korn. Music had always held a prominent place in his life, but for this period, the immersion into Chassidus took precedence.

But his music wasn’t put on hold completely. He performed at little clubs which turned into bigger clubs and seemed to attract a growing number of admirers. From his early days at the YAM Jams (Youth Action Movement gatherings) people began to take notice of his immense G-d-given talent. You could tell that this young man was different as a performer. He was an utter natural, a star. By the time he was at the Hadar HaTorah summer program in the Catskills, other students learning with him noticed that a film crew was following him around!

* * *

In cyberspace, the name Matisyahu is readily found – but nothing, at least initially, on the Kohen Gadol of Chasmonian fame. There are websites for his fans, websites for his critics, websites for his music, and endless ranting in blogs.

To make a long story short, for now, a lot has happened in Matisyahu’s life in a relatively short time. On the one hand, he found his other half in a NYU graduate student, Tali, and settled down to married life in Crown Heights and to being a loving, hands-on father to their infant son, Levi Yitzchok. On the other hand, his career – and perhaps unique shlichus – began to spiral in an upwards soar that still sees no bounds. He has signed with the world’s leading recording company, Sony, and his latest release, *Youth*, has sold half-a-million copies, peaking at number 4 in the Billboard charts and so far staying on the charts for 9 weeks at the time of this

article. He has been written about by leading newspapers and entertainment magazines across America and is currently touring the globe.

* * *

Beis

Moshiach: Given your incredible success and the fact that you’ve become a household name virtually overnight, you’ve come to represent various things to all kinds of people – Jewish and l’havdil, non-Jews alike. How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself foremost as a



shliach or an entertainer?

Matisyahu: No, I definitely don’t see myself at all as an entertainer. I always thought of entertainment as something like wrestling or a circus. I always thought of music as being something spiritual. So I guess I see myself as like a modern-day Chassid.

CHABAD TIME!

Anyone who has waited in line for hours to get a L’chayim or dollar from the Rebbe, knows the preciousness of each millisecond with the nasi of our

generation, the Rebbe, MH" M. Within the seconds that it took to be shuffled along in line, literally, an entire life could be changed and permanently elevated. Minutes in a yechidus were even more precious.

A Chassidic farbrengen, on the other hand, was an occasion to elaborate, to expand, to replenish the l'chaim cup, break for a niggun, and go higher and higher until late hours turned to morning light.

It was more of a farbrengen-style interview we had hoped to have with Matisyahu. This wasn't how it turned out. After being put in contact with his lawyer and then several publicists, we reached a New York City-based public relations firm, which initially explained that Matisyahu's schedule was full and could not include any new interviews for what could be months. And besides that, he was about to leave on his first international tour.

It's good that the media are interested in hearing about G-dliness. We persisted to publicist Aliza Rabinoff, who called the two years she's worked with Matisyahu "a wonderful experience" – but this is a little like the shoemaker's family that doesn't have shoes. "I'll do what I can," she said with understanding and honesty.

In honor of Yud-Aleph Nissan, the Rebbe's 104th birthday, we received a strictly-monitored 15-minutes.

* * *

Beis Moshiach: Do you have time to be a person, to do the things you want to do, or do you feel like you're being swept away in someone else's game?

Matisyahu: That's part of an avoda: to surround yourself with people that sort of understand that you need to have that time. That's been sort of a process for me, figuring out who are the people I want to be around.

Beis Moshiach: What kind of people do you take influence and advice from?

Matisyahu: Halachically, I count on my wife [to seek advice on my behalf] because she's amazing and sharp in terms of picking up on something that doesn't seem right. She goes to Rav Osdoba. Spiritually, I receive most of my guidance from a guy named Efraim Rosenstein. He



Matisyahu with Jimmy Kimmel



An early concert

lives in Chevron. He's a therapist. You might have heard of him before. He works with a lot of young teens. He's really a good guy and someone who I feel like I can trust. I feel that he really understands; he doesn't get caught up in definitions but searches for the meaning.

BODY AND SOUL, BRAIN AND HEART

Music critics and reviewers and lots of people with vocal opinions have certainly attempted to categorize, peg, label, understand, analyze and meditate upon Matisyahu, his music, and everything else related under the sun.

Beis Moshiach: Given the title of your latest album, "Youth," are they the group that you most want to reach out to?

Matisyahu: Not necessarily, but I feel that's definitely the group of people I'd like to be there for.

Beis Moshiach: What message do you most want to impart to people?

Matisyahu: I don't see that I'm trying to impart a message as much as I'm trying to just provide support, support for people that are searching and for people that are looking for G-d and need to have hope, that have pain and problems. I just hope that the music I had growing up that was there for me, providing strength and providing guidance – I hope that my music fills that role for Jews and non-Jews, for young kids...

Beis Moshiach: Do you see the music or the lyrics as the main emphasis that will accomplish that, or a combination of the two?

Matisyahu: I don't see it as a separation. When you have a song you have the music and the lyrics and the two are bound together like the body and the soul...or maybe more like the brain and the heart. The lyrics are the brain and the music is the heart.

WEEP WITH JOY

Every time I listen to "King Without a Crown" it makes me weep with joy. He sings with such intensity and gut-feeling that it makes my soul fly.

—Kazsimir

FAMOUS CHASSID

Matisyahu has become the most famous Chassid this side of the Baal Shem Tov.

—"G-d's Reggae Star"
by Jody Rosen

Beis Moshiach: Is there something intrinsic to the music? Do you feel that reggae is the ideal expression for the message you have, for your lyrics?

Matisyahu: No. I don't consider my music reggae either. When it comes to the music, I don't see it in terms of categories or styles; I think more in terms like if you would think of a niggun. If you have an outpouring from the soul, you wouldn't classify it in sort of a category, right? When it comes to music I think more organic – that you pick up different things and as a musician it effects you in your outlook and how the music comes out.

Beis Moshiach: Do you think that your musical style could change completely then, to be a different style entirely?

Matisyahu: G-d willing, the music will change. Change is a sign of life.

* * *

As you would expect, Matisyahu has his own website, complete with an autobiography, scheduled concert performances, and a variety of other information and contacts. According to one count, his site has received more than a million hits.

Beis Moshiach: How do you view your success?

Matisyahu: I don't know. It's kind of a whirlwind. Everything's been happening and going on in the last couple of two or three years. It's been a little chaotic and there hasn't been so much time to— Not even time, because it's not even about time; it's about the kind of person you are. I feel it's very hard to reflect and

Photo by Danny Clinch



meditate on my life so it just kind of like happens. One minute you're a bachur in yeshiva and the next minute you're selling 500,000 records or whatever and you don't feel like you're a different person. You feel like the same person.

CRITICISM AND COMPLEMENTS

Matisyahu tries not to read too much of what his varied critics have to say, lest, as he says, "you get a little negative." On the other hand, he says with an acknowledging laugh, it seems to be something he's getting

more of: "If you're unheard of, it's cool to bring you up, but once you're heard of, the cool thing is to bring you down!"

Beis Moshiach: How do you handle praise?

Matisyahu: Certain things sink in and certain things don't. When people are just running up to me and stopping me on the street and saying things like 'you're great' – that kind of just shakes off. But once in awhile you learn that the music affected someone in a really meaningful way. Or you hear about something you've done that affected someone in a way

that it becomes not about you but about something much bigger than you.

Beis Moshiach: Do you have any stories about individuals you've helped to inspire?

Matisyahu: I don't necessarily hear

about it in great detail. I was in Florida and someone was speaking at an NA (Narcotics Anonymous) meeting about being nine years clean. We were at a radio station that morning and a kid later told me he heard the lyrics and that week went to a rehabilitation center and cleaned

himself up. That kind of story makes you feel it's about something bigger than you. Instead of thinking, 'I did a show today and I'm not sounding so great' or 'I'm just repeating songs,' you realize that you're affecting people and that's the most important thing.

* * *

Although more and more Jews are finding their way back to their Torah roots in the Chabad houses in the mountains of India and other exotic spots, there are unfortunately, still many more who drop into the likes of the inappropriate shadows of MTV (music TV). It is in that venue where Matisyahu's song, "King Without a Crown" became most well known across the public who listens. In this song, Matisyahu sings about wanting Moshiach now.

Beis Moshiach: How do you think your references about Moshiach are received by your fans? The controversy has always been that if you are too up-front, people may get turned off. Have you had that experience or the contrary?

Matisyahu: Well, my experience has been in a way that I'm not sort of forcing it down people's throats, like as if someone just took the words and went into the street and rammed it down people's throats. So the context makes them more open to hearing and that, G-d-willing, they will want to hear 'Moshiach' (and think) what does that word mean? And it was mentioned before about reggae music and redemption – I try to put it out there in a way people can relate to. So I think you can speak about



Photo by Danny Clinch

Photo by Dan Mandell



those things, about Moshiach and Redemption, if you know how to speak in the right context. If you come from a true place in yourself, then people will respond to it.

Beis Moshiach: What is the role of the Rebbe in your day-to-day life and in your mission, and as a singer? How does the Rebbe influence your work?

Matisyahu: I think that my becoming religious was very strongly influenced by the Rebbe and to the shliach that I met who moved me to a

much further place than I would have gotten to on my own. So I credit the Rebbe for that...and while I never knew the Rebbe, I learned to a certain degree the Rebbe's sichos and maamarim and they had a very big effect on me, and I went to Crown Heights and learned in yeshiva. But me personally, I'm in a situation where I'm just trying to be honest and I don't know the Rebbe...I write to the Rebbe and I look at pictures of the Rebbe and I feel comforted that the Rebbe might be with me or might

be influencing me, but I don't claim to know what the Rebbe's all about. Maybe from the Rebbe's point-of-view, he's very bound to me and I just don't know it. I'm open to it; I'm not closed to it.

Beis Moshiach: We see it!

I wish you much success, and hope you continue to get closer to the Rebbe all the time and play a major role in Moshiach's immediate revelation.

Matisyahu: Amen!

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REACHING OUT TO THE WORLD WHILE LOOKING OUT FOR OUR YOUTH

INTERVIEW BY BORUCH MERKUR

Interview with Rabbi Akiva Wagner of Yeshivas Lubavitch, Toronto regarding the success of Matisyahu, the proper place of music intended for outreach, and the effect on our Youth.

Beis Moshiach: How important is it for a rosh yeshiva to maintain a connection with the bachurim on a personal level?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: It's extremely important. The main success of any yeshiva today is measured not by the quality or standard of the shiurim, but rather by the personal connection and personal interaction between the hanhala and the bachurim.

Beis Moshiach: Does this include monitoring and being involved with influencing what type of music they listen to?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: The world has changed from the way it used to be. We're living in a time in which there has been r"l an explosion of destructive outside influences, in every single area of life. The only way to maintain standards for our youth is by being much more cautious and much

more vigilant in protecting them and insulating them against these outside influences.

Beis Moshiach: Do the bachurim appreciate that type of monitoring and protection? How do they respond to it?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: Obviously the bachurim range a lot in this, just like they range in every other area. I find that the majority of bachurim appreciate the objective of the monitoring and the need for it. Therefore, even though they sometimes don't understand or agree with a specific rule or a specific standard, nonetheless, because they identify with the ultimate goal, they are cooperative and even appreciative. That's what I find in most cases.

Beis Moshiach: Since there is a range amongst the bachurim, is there a lot of peer pressure and a lot of influence from those who are holding

at a less frum standard?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: There's always great impact that bachurim have on each other, in every area, and it applies in both directions [i.e., the better bachurim influence the weaker bachurim and vice versa].

Beis Moshiach: We are preparing an interview with Matisyahu, the extremely successful singer who lives in Crown Heights and became a baal t'shuva through Chabad. Have you heard his music?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner (smiling): I haven't yet had the z'chus to hear his music.

Beis Moshiach: The lyrics and themes of Matisyahu's music are derived from Jewish and even Chabad sources. Does this classify his music as Jewish music per se?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: Obviously what I am going to say is only my opinion. I don't think that fact is enough to classify it as Jewish music. Although, considering his goals and the people he's aiming to reach, it is possible that for them it can be considered Jewish.

Beis Moshiach: So there's different standards of how we define Jewish music. For bachurim in Chabad there's a much higher standard—

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: I'll give you a simple example. When Rabbi Berel Levy a"h passed away, his son Rabbi Don Yoel Levy took over the whole OK enterprise. Being very idealistic, he wanted to raise the overall standards of OK, and one of the changes he wanted to implement was to not issue an OK hechsher on any food that's not chalav Yisroel. His reasoning was that since we don't recognize non-chalav Yisroel as meeting our standard of kashrus, the OK shouldn't certify it as kosher. When he informed the Rebbe of his plan, the Rebbe, to his surprise, strongly opposed it. The Rebbe then said to him [following is the gist of the Rebbe's reply, not the exact wording]: "Should people who are not yet keeping [away from eating or drinking] chalav akum not have the option of keeping kosher?!"

So, although the Rebbe told him to give a hashgacha and to certify non-chalav Yisroel products as kosher, and this had the effect of increasing the numbers of people who would keep kosher, it's self-understood that in a Lubavitcher home non-chalav Yisroel foods would be considered below our standards of kashrus. Chassidim, who displayed mesirus nefesh for every aspect of halacha, would have surely had mesirus nefesh for chalav Yisroel also. In fact, there's many shluchim in far-flung destinations who have mesirus nefesh, relatively speaking, to bring up their families without compromising on chalav Yisroel. So while non-chalav Yisroel is kosher enough for us to certify it as kosher for the "world," to a Lubavitcher Chassid, something that's not chalav Yisroel is not kosher. And that's something that everyone understands.

I'll give you another example. The Rebbe used to call the *K'far Chabad Magazine* his "shofar," and the Rebbe obviously saw a very great benefit in what it does, as far as fighting the cause of *Mihu Yehudi* and the *shtachim*, etc. And yet it was always understood – and I believe Reb Mendel Futerfas

used to farbreng about this – that for bachurim, it's not the most appropriate pastime. It was understood that the pastime of a bachur should be a maamer Chassidus, a sicha, a *Likkutei Dibburim*, etc. While *K'far Chabad* or *Beis Moshiach* may be a vehicle for publicizing the Rebbe's views to the world, and for the world it is surely an object of holiness, for a bachur it can be the opposite: *bittul Torah*. Even for a Chassidische balebos it may be an admirable pursuit, but for a bachur, at certain times, it is inappropriate.

Another example: Would any Lubavitcher even think of wearing t'fillin that are not 4x4? Of course not. To provide such t'fillin to thousands of Jews over the world (as the "t'fillin bank" is doing) is the greatest thing in the world, yet for us ourselves to don them is unthinkable. (My father a"h never considered himself a Lubavitcher Chassid, yet he always put on t'fillin according to minhag Lubavitch. Once when I expressed my curiosity about this, he told me that when he learned in yeshiva in Bedford (around 1956), his mashpia was R' Dovid Raskin. Once R' Dovid Raskin made a deal with him that he would purchase for

him a pair of t'fillin that are 4x4, on the condition that my father commits to always wear his "keshet" according to the nusach of the Alter Rebbe. I found it especially interesting that – although, to my knowledge, even at that time he did not consider himself a Lubavitcher Chassid, yet – while learning in a Lubavitcher yeshiva, 4x4 t'fillin was important enough to him as to warrant his making a very long-term commitment for their sake.)

So too, there could be music that is Jewish for the world – it may be "kosher" for the general public and, in **some** cases, even for a Lubavitcher balebos – and yet for someone who's maintaining a higher standard (i.e., a bachur) they're not kosher, or perhaps, for him, not even "Jewish."

In the Rambam there's a concept regarding tuma and tahara – that there's different stages of tuma and tahara. And what's considered tahor for truma is considered tamei for kodesh, etc. And someone who toiveled for truma is still considered tamei for kodesh, etc.

Beis Moshiach: So for music that you deem not to be appropriate for



Rabbi Akiva Wagner farbrenging in 770

people of the standard of bachurim in a Chabad yeshiva would you then classify it as something that is forbidden? And are they aware of that, if that is the case? Is it something that is very cut-and-dried, very apparent that these things are not acceptable in the dorms or in a yeshiva environment?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: In my opinion there are 2 points here. [1] Music that has a certain non-Jewish *taam* to it, a certain non-Jewish style, or that is totally derived from goyishe sources, I would say is forbidden, in most cases even for those who are not bachurim. [2] Even if there's nothing inherently non-Jewish about the music (and what that means is probably debatable; different people can have different definitions), something that's not purely "Chassidish" is still not appropriate for a bachur. I wouldn't use the word (in the 2nd case) "forbidden," because (while it may be forbidden by the rules of the yeshiva) it's not forbidden, it's not something that's inherently bad. But that's not what a bachur is supposed to be into.

If music is in any way goyish, while it could be perfect for reaching larger crowds, for a bachur in yeshiva (and in some cases for any Lubavitcher Chassid) it's forbidden. With any other music, if it's not "Chassidische" music, it is not appropriate. We have to remember that not everything that is OK to use for outreach, is OK to be found in a Lubavitcher home, in a Lubavitcher dorm room, or a gathering of Lubavitcher children.

Beis Moshiach: Independent of the hanhala's influence on the bachurim, are you aware of the way that they relate to Matisyahu and his music? How do they naturally respond to the whole inyan of what Matisyahu represents?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: I don't know what he represents, but I'm sure that just like any fad that's popular in the world, it inevitably finds an appeal to certain bachurim, and especially when

they're able to convince themselves that it's something Jewish, maybe even Chassidish. So, I'm sure there are bachurim who find something attractive about it.

Beis Moshiach: Do you see that as a very significant problem?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: The fact that they find something attractive about it per se – I don't see that as a significant problem. The fact that they look to such directions to find their enjoyment, the fact that they're not focused on where they should really be finding their enjoyment – that's a significant problem.

You know, a bachur once came over to me, very excited, and he told me he wants to show me a beautiful idea that inspired him. He showed me one of Rabbi Tzvi Freeman's books, a meditation or something in it. He said, "Isn't that beautiful?"

I read the line, and I said to him: This is a word-for-word translation of a *pisgam* of the Rebbe Maharash which is in *HaYom Yom* – nothing added at all, just translated into English, the words of the *HaYom Yom* word-for-word. He responded that he hadn't known.

On the one hand, I thought: That's great. Rabbi Tzvi Freeman is bringing the words of the *HaYom Yom* to this bachur who wouldn't hear them otherwise. But on the other hand, it's a symptom of a problem: the fact that the bachur doesn't get his inspiration directly from *HaYom Yom*. I think that the reason for this is because a bachur will learn *HaYom Yom*, hear it daily after davening, and not **expect** to find inspiration there; "that's just *HaYom Yom*" [he might say to himself], therefore, he doesn't **find** inspiration there. Whereas, in Rabbi Tzvi Freeman's book he expects to find inspiration, and therefore, he'll see a translation of the exact same thing, word-for-word, and he'll find it inspiring.

There's a story the Rebbe brings down in *Kuntres Inyano Shel Toras*

HaChassidus that there were people who were debating the relative merits of the different political parties, which one is right according to Torah. Every one of them brought a source to his position and they asked the Frieddike Rebbe who is right. The Rebbe said, "The Torah is the ultimate truth, and any truthful aspect in any of the parties is what it derived from Torah." The point of the story is that whatever enjoyment – and in *s'farim* it says this specifically regarding *negina* – whatever beauty there is to any worldly thing is just the *shmarei ha'ofanim* of what's there in pure, authentic Yiddishkeit and Chassidus. If a bachur would seek inspiration in Chassidische niggunim, he would ultimately discover a much more meaningful source of inspiration there.

So the problem is the fact that some bachurim are looking in the wrong places, they're missing the pride in who they are, the appreciation of what Chabad Chassidus can provide them with.

And I have to emphasize again that I'm sure many bachurim in yeshivos have never heard Matisyahu. I'm speaking about that element that does have that attraction. That's how I would define the problem.

Beis Moshiach: What is the proper place for Matisyahu's music? Where is it appropriate for it to exist?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: I already said that I don't know exactly what the music is, but I understand that it has an amazing impact in *hafatzas ha'maayanos* and in outreach. If so, that is its place. (I want to emphasize that most of the points I'm making are general, not primarily about one specific singer or another.)

Beis Moshiach: It sold half-a-million copies.

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: Fine. It probably is transmitting very important messages to a lot of people. And wherever those messages have to be brought out, that's where it has an

important place. In Chabad houses, in shlichus programs. In those places where you're not going to be able to go and *chazer* a maamer Chassidus, nor are they necessarily ready to hear a *Nicho'ach* tape, there it can do a job that otherwise couldn't be done.

But within the Daled amos of Lubavitch, whether in a Lubavitcher yeshiva, a Chassidisher home, or at an event geared to Lubavitcher children, there we should expect higher standards, purer standards. Even the enjoyment and the entertainment of a Lubavitcher Chasid should be from Lubavitcher niggunim. It should be from a Chassidishe singer who sings Chassidishe niggunim.

You know, Avrohom Fried had a tremendous impact through his recent tapes. Much of the Jewish world walks around singing Chassidish niggunim, you know, the real old, authentic Chassidishe niggunim that they never would have known, if not for Avrohom Fried. It's a tremendous accomplishment. All the same, a Lubavitcher bachur shouldn't be getting these things from Avrohom Fried. The "Misnagdishe" world may need Avrohom Fried to provide them with this aspect of Chabad Chassidus, but whatever subtle *taam* that Avrohom Fried has to add into [the songs] for his tapes to have an appeal to the outside world – that's not for us.

And true, it's something that has to be worked on, but bachurim have to have this focus and realization. All those bachurim who did get this focus, this realization, found their lives infinitely richer because of it.

Beis Moshiach: How should our community at large view Matisyahu or singers like him?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: I think the way we should see him is as a Lubavitcher Chassid who's using his G-d-given talents to do good things, as long as he's following the directives of his mashpia or Chassidishe rav. The Gemara says, "*kabed es Hashem m'honcha' – al tikra m'honcha ella*

m'garoncha." In addition to the general idea that everyone has to use their abilities to serve Hashem, it's specifically said about serving Hashem with the voice, the vocal chords. So a Chassid who uses these talents to serve Hashem and spread the Torah ideals – that's beautiful.

What we have to focus on is that there's many Chassidim who do many things for outreach and we have to remember the distinction between what we're giving other people, and what's good for ourselves. Just like with *chalav Yisroel*, just like with all these examples. This line between what's appropriate for "*hafatza*" and

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what's fitting for "p'nim" is something that we can't lose sight of.

Beis Moshiach: I have a quote from Rabbi Tuvia Bolton, the mashpia in Kfar Chabad, that links the success of Matisyahu to the imminence of Redemption, of Geula. Do you see any similarity?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: Well, again, I'm not a student of Matisyahu songs. I never gave much time to the study of Matisyahu—

Beis Moshiach: Assuming that his songs have a Chabad, Chassidishe tochen and given his popularity—

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: Yes, given from what I hear about it, it makes sense to say that the fact that there's someone who's using tools that are worldly tools and using them to spread Chassidus, pure Chassidus, to so many hundreds of thousands of people, this is really what the Rebbe defined as a *dira ba'tachtonim*. This was the concept that the Rebbe spoke about regarding radio and television and satellite, using all the world's forces for *k'dusha*. So it's very easy to view what's happening as another stage of that, another manifestation of that.

Beis Moshiach: Could you confirm what I heard that the Rebbe gave *brachos* even to bands who played blatantly non-Jewish styles of music, to do *hafatza*, because they introduced Yiddishe tochen into their music? Have you heard such a thing?

Rabbi Akiva Wagner: I haven't. But you have to be able to see that in the right context. The Rebbe gave a *bracha* to everyone who came to him, and not just a *bracha* but encouragement. There's so many letters that are printed that spell this out clearly – that no matter who the person is, and no matter what kind of views he may have, there is some contribution that he has to make. You see this with writers, for example, who thought the Rebbe would completely shun them because of their philosophies and/or lifestyles. Yet the Rebbe's approach was always: You have a talent. Whatever differences of opinion you may have are unimportant, but whatever talents you have and whatever *ko'ach* you have, use them in your way and in your field to do good and to spread good in whatever way it is.

We have to remember, though, that just because someone is using his skills in a positive way and accomplishing good things with them, doesn't necessarily sanction it for our homes, our children, and ourselves.

WHEN THE LAND BEARS ITS FRUIT, IS THERE NO END MORE REVEALED THAN THIS?

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

In response to requests by our readers, we now present the first in a series of questions and answers from the seifer Between Light and Darkness, Rabbi Sholom Dovber HaLevi Wolpo's provocative new guide for the perplexed regarding the establishment regime in Eretz Yisroel today and the tragic events they have brought upon the Jewish People.

Tractate Sanhedrin states (98a): “And Rabbi Abba says, ‘You have no end more revealed than this,’ as is written (Yechezkel 36:8), “But you, mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to My people Israel.” Rashi’s commentary: “*more revealed than this* – when Eretz Yisroel gives its fruit generously, then the end will draw near, and you have no end more revealed.”

Rabbi Abba’s words are well understood in light of the Ramban’s commentary (Parshas B’Chukosai

26:16), “When it says (ibid., 26:32), ‘it will become desolate of your enemies,’ this is a good and auspicious tiding in all the exiles that our land will not accept our enemies. Furthermore, this is a great proof and assurance for us that you will not find in any settlement a land that is so good and spacious, always inhabited, and as ruined as this one. For since we went out from it, it has received no nation and language, and all have tried to settle it, and none of them succeeded.” Similarly, Rabbeinu Bachai comments (Parshas Lech Lecha 17:24): “This is a great sign for

Israel that from the day that they were exiled from it, no nation whatsoever settled it, rather it is destroyed and desolate until its chicks come into it.”

This curse has been fulfilled throughout all the years of exile, and now, when the first pioneers returned to the land, it has been shaken free of the curse. The immigrants of the first aliya, the start of the path of Zionism, began to work the soil of the land. Instead of preventing the yield of its harvest as it did throughout all the years of exile, the land suddenly gave forth its fruits in great measure. This is a clear proof that the curse of the exile has come to its conclusion. We have no further data on, “And I have given your cities to destruction,” rather the blessing of, “And I will remember the land.” Thus, we see clearly that “you have no end more revealed than this.”

ANSWER:

1. In the main body of this seifer, we brought the Rebbe’s answer to this question in its simplest sense: Even though the Rambam certainly knew about this saying of our Sages,

nevertheless, he ruled that the Redemption will come specifically through Moshiach. We now bring further answers that address the heart of this matter, bringing a greater sense of understanding as to why Rambam ruled as he did despite this saying.

2. The questioner brings the quote from Rashi: “then **the end will draw near**” (according to the continuation of the pasuk, “to My people Israel, for they will soon come). This means that the giving forth of fruits is not a sign that this is the Redemption, rather merely that the time is **coming closer**, i.e., the sign is only that the time is **approaching**, not that it has **already come**.

3. The Gemara brings a clear proof that we’re only talking about signs that indicate the Redemption’s drawing near and not its actual arrival, when it **immediately** continues with the following sign: “Rabbi Eliezer says that even here, as is said (Zecharia 8:10), ‘For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him who went out or came in,’ and Rashi explains, “When you see that no man earns anything...until the last penny from the pocket is spent... neither was there any peace to him who went out or came in...**then Moshiach will come**. And those who went out or came in, i.e., the Torah scholars who are judged to go out and come in peacefully, even they have no peace.” It is clear that these signs of **no livelihood and no peace** (particularly among the Torah scholars) are neither the Redemption nor the *is’chalta d’Geula*, rather to the contrary – a situation attesting to the depth of the exile – and only when the descent is so frightful can there be a sign that we will soon reach the end of the exile through Moshiach. Similarly, the sign of the giving forth of the fruits also teaches us that the Redemption

through Melech HaMoshiach will soon commence, not that this marks the actual start of the Redemption.

4. It should be noted that even in connection with the recognition that the land bearing fruits is a sign that the Redemption is coming closer, this is actually no contradiction, as there have already been numerous appointed times that have passed, to the point that the Gemara establishes (Sanhedrin 97b) that “all the appointed times have passed.”

5. The Maharsha brings a further interpretation of the Gemara, stating that the trees will bear fruit **every day**



– “and this is a miraculous thing that is surely a revealed ‘appointed time.’” Accordingly, it is clear that the natural phenomenon of trees bearing fruit is not even a sign that the Redemption is coming. Even the Maharal (“Netzach Yisroel, Ch. 39) explains this with deeper interpretations, **see there**, where clearly the natural process of growing fruits is neither the time nor a sign of the time of Redemption, and especially not the *is’chalta d’Geula* itself.

6. In the very chapter (Yechezkel 36) containing the pasuk on the “revealed end,” the prophet rebuked

today’s Zionism (from verse 17): “Son of man, when the house of Israel **dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their doings**...And when they (the departing emigrants) entered among the nations where they went, they profaned (even in Chutz La’Aretz) My Holy Name, when it was said of them (by the nations): This is the people of Hashem, and they went out from their land.” Afterwards, he concludes (from verse 22) that despite all this, **G-d** will bring their Redemption in order to sanctify His Name that they had defiled, and the first thing will be “And I will cast pure waters upon you...And I will give you a new heart,” and only **afterwards**, “And you will dwell in the land...And you will be nation unto Me...**And I will make plentiful the fruits of the tree**.” As a result, the entire revealed end of fruit bearing, even if this does refer to physical fruits, this only comes after the introduction of “And I will cast pure waters upon you...And I will give you a new heart.”

7. In any event, even if you choose to ignore all this, the sign of fruit growth has no relevance whatsoever to the establishment of the State. For even if no state had been established, we could say that the fact that Eretz Yisroel bears fruit (at least since the beginning of the current settlement of the land more than a century ago) is a sign that the appointed time is approaching, etc. This has absolutely no connection to “Jewish rule” in Eretz Yisroel, which they specifically call *is’chalta d’Geula*.

8. In conclusion, if the “blossoming of the fruits” is “the revealed end,” then what about the **uprooting** of hundreds of fruit trees, the **destruction** of tens of thousands of vegetable seedlings, the **ruin** of thousands of dunams of fields and greenhouses?! Isn’t this a “revealed sign” that the State has delayed, removed, and postponed the end of the exile?

R' YISROEL NEVELER

BY RABBI SHNEUR ZALMAN CHANIN

*Perhaps it was because he did not live long that very few remembered R' Yisroel Neveler: a pnimiyusdiker Chassid, replete with Torah and Chassidus, incomparably energetic and sharp, who was capable of Chassidic pranks when "necessary." * However, R' Chaikel remembered him – and how!*

“DRAG IT TO THE BEIS MIDRASH”

The Chassid, Rabbi Yisroel Levin, known as R' Yisroel Neveler for his hometown Nevel, was one of the lions of the group. He was a Chassid who was distant from matters of this world, G-d-fearing in the fullest sense of the term, and his greatness in Nigleh and Chassidus was a byword.

R' Yisroel was outstanding in his sharp lines and his wonderful sense of humor. He had a tremendous influence on the young Chassidim who enjoyed his prankish humor and his cleverness. They listened to him and what he said was engraved on their heart and tremendously affected them.

He was a mischievous child. He once told my father that because of his pranks he was expelled from Lubavitch three times. He told my father the reason for the first expulsion:

Before Purim, R' Yisroel wanted to

demonstrate to the bachurim how someone who didn't learn Chassidus fulfilled the mitzva of “*ad d'lo yada*” (drinking to oblivion). In the town of Lubavitch, there were no Misnagdim, so he took a goat from someone's yard, gave it mashke to drink, and dragged it to the zal of Tomchei T'mimim as a Purim joke.

Naturally, when he released the drunken goat in the beis midrash, it created havoc.

FOR FINANCIAL REASONS

In the meantime, the owner of the goat discovered that it was missing and he began to search for it until someone told him that he saw one of the T'mimim dragging the goat towards the beis midrash. The man found it hard to believe this, nevertheless, he ran to the yeshiva to see for himself.

From a distance, he could hear peals of laughter coming from the beis midrash and as he approached, he saw how the bachurim were enjoying

the drunken goat's antics.

The owner was furious and he ran to the Rebbe Rayatz, who was the acting menahel, and told him what had happened – that one of the bachurim had taken his goat and had given it mashke and taken it to the beis midrash!

The Rebbe told the hanhala of the yeshiva to investigate the matter and R' Yisroel Neveler had no choice but to confess. The next day he was called to the office and was told that a talmid who did such irresponsible mischief had no place in the yeshiva. R' Yisroel sadly took his few belongings and prepared to return to his parents in Nevel.

The next day he met the Rebbe Rayatz in the yard of the yeshiva. In response to the Rebbe's asking him what he was doing there when he had been sent home, R' Yisroel replied:

I made a simple calculation that it's not worth the yeshiva's while to send me home. It's in the middle of the winter and the roads are full of snow. If I walk, because I don't have money to pay for a wagon, I'll freeze from the cold along the way.

As long as I don't reach home, I am under the supervision of the yeshiva and so they will return me, dead, to the yeshiva. The hanhala of the yeshiva will have to call the chevra kadisha to buy shrouds, a coffin, a plot in the cemetery and a gravestone, and this will cost the yeshiva a lot of money. So I figured that if remain in yeshiva another few

years I will be able to save the yeshiva a lot of money!

The Rebbe enjoyed R' Yisroel's ingenious reply and allowed him back into yeshiva.

A STORY ABOUT PANTS

As a young student in Lubavitch, R' Yisroel Neveler was so poor that he had nothing to wear. His pants were so ragged that the patches were the main part. However, the patches wore out and the holes became bigger from day to day.

R' Yisroel went to R' Leizer Kantorshik (Kaplan) who was in charge of the bachurim's material needs, and asked him for some material out of which pants could be sewn for him. But R' Leizer, like most people in charge of public funds, was tight with money, to put it nicely, and he did not give him material but pushed him off with various excuses.

When R' Yisroel went over to him for the fifth or sixth time and exclaimed, "Gevald! Give me material to have pants sewn," R' Leizer mockingly asked him, "And what will happen if I give you material for

pants?"

R' Yisroel replied, "*Es vet zain leizer in di hoizen*" (my pants will be looser, more comfortable – a play of words on R' Leizer's name).

R' Leizer, embarrassed by the answer, was annoyed, and did not give him material for the pants.

One day, the Rebbe Rayatz entered the zal and saw Yisroel Neveler and his ragged pants. He called R' Yisroel over and asked him why he didn't have new pants sewn as it wasn't fitting for a talmid of Tomchei T'mimim to be seen that way. R' Yisroel told the Rebbe that he had asked R' Leizer for material several times but had been pushed off by him each time.

The Rebbe Rayatz personally went to R' Leizer to ask him for an explanation. R' Leizer was upset and said that he had given R' Yisroel material some time ago to patch his pants and what should he do when R' Yisroel tore them so quickly?

The Rebbe told him: What do I care that several months ago you gave him material when I'm looking at him

right now and I see through the holes!

I don't remember the stories about the other two times R' Yisroel was expelled from yeshiva. Maybe my father never told me or maybe I forgot. I would be happy if any reader would let me know the details.

HOW DO YOU REPROVE

My father would often mention R' Yisroel Neveler. It was obvious that my father, who was present at most of R' Yisroel's farbrengens, was deeply impressed by them and he told me about these farbrengens for years. He often repeated the stories he had heard, and the various comments R' Yisroel had made.

One Shabbos in Tashkent, R' Yisroel was the main speaker at the farbrengen. He drank a lot of mashke and tried to instill in the Chassidim the idea that Ahavas Yisroel needs to be with literal mesirus nefesh. It was obvious to him that even when someone had only one flask of water (and who had more at that time?) and the halacha is that "your life takes precedence," and you have to take care of yourself and your family – still, even then, you must treat another like a member of the family and share with him, thus preserving your humanity.

During the decrees of that time, when most of Anash withstood the tests of chinuch, Shabbos, and kashrus, there were some who did not withstand the tests. R' Yisroel dedicated a fiery farbrengen to what Chazal say on the verse, "And it was in the time when the judges judged" – "a generation that judges its judges." He [the judge] says to him: Remove the splinter from between your eyes [i.e., stop the small sin you are doing –Rashi]. He replies: Remove the beam from between your eyes [i.e., the judges themselves were corrupt and it was an opportunity for the one being reproved to reprove the judge ... to tell him to remove the beam from between his eyes means from the



R' Yisroel with a picture of a group of Anash in Russia in the background

serious sin you do —Rashi (Bava Basra 15b)].

R' Yisroel asked: Seemingly, the one being judged was right! He is being judged for not fulfilling a certain rabbinic mitzva and his response is: How can you rebuke me for not fulfilling the words of the Sages, which are like a splinter when you, the judge, are transgressing biblical laws, which are like a beam in comparison to a splinter? "Fix yourself up first and then fix up others!"

R' Yisroel applied it to their times: If one of you would say to his friend, "remove the splinter," and reprove him about a minhag or a minor detail of Rabbinic law saying: How does this benefit you, a Tamim, to act this way? From someone like you we expect "going beyond the letter of the law." Take yourself in hand, fix yourself up and learn more Chassidus!-

The friend could say: How could you reprove me about a "splinter," a minor detail when you transgress on a "beam," which is a biblical transgression. Fix yourself first!

What's wrong with what he said? Although the one giving the reproof needs to be suited to the task, since everyone is obligated to demand that his friend improve himself, the one on the receiving end needs to accept the truth from the one who said it!

Upon hearing proof he shouldn't "judge the judges" but lovingly accept it and try to fix that which needs correcting, and only at another opportunity, perhaps at the next farbrengen, may he reprove his friend for the friend's transgression, which is like a beam.

THE POWER OF THE IMAGINATION

At another farbrengen, R' Yisroel demanded hiskashrus to the Rebbe Rayatz, who was in Poland at the time. Most of the participants at the farbrengen, primarily the young ones,

had never seen the Rebbe. Because of the ongoing persecution, it was dangerous to be in touch with those abroad in general and with

"Schneerson" in particular.

It was impossible to correspond with the Rebbe, never mind to go and see him, but R' Yisroel still wanted to

APHORISMS OF R' YISROEL NEVELER

He would say: The truth is that for flattery one should give a slap and for an insult, a kiss. But I have never seen a slap given for flattery or a kiss given for an insult.

* * *

On the verse, "It is not good for man to be alone, I will make him a helpmate against him," Rashi says, "If he merits, she's a helpmate; if he does not merit, she's against him."

R' Yisroel explained it thus:

A man married and if he merits, his wife is a helpmate, i.e., he goes to shul and she is busy with the household needs; he goes to learn and she cooks and bakes, cleans and polishes. But if he does not merit then she is against him, i.e., she does precisely what **he** does! He goes to shul and she goes with him. He goes to learn and she goes to a shiur...

* * *

I think this is in the name of the Rebbe Rayatz: "Many are the pains of the wicked one, as for the one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him." The simple meaning of this verse is that the wicked have many pains but the one who trusts in Hashem has only good.

If you examine the punctuation of the verse, you see that you are supposed to pause after the words "one who trusts in Hashem." However, then the verse is not understandable because one would think the verse ought to say, "Many are the pains of the wicked one (pause), as for the one who trusts in Hashem, kindness surrounds him," and not as one long phrase, "Many are the pains of the wicked and the one who trusts in Hashem!"

Explained the Rebbe: "Many are the pains of the wicked" and one of his pains is "and one who trusts in Hashem" – why does so-and-so trust in Hashem? He can't stand it and it pains him that a Jew trusts in Hashem!

* * *

During a farbrengen, when he tried to teach and guide the men who were present, he would often say on the verse in T'hilim, "They devise iniquities, they have completed a diligent search, within man and in the depth of the heart":

"They devise iniquities" – they seek iniquities about one another,

"They have completed" – when the iniquities are completed they still want to seek out more iniquities,

"A diligent search" – he goes far and seeks repeatedly, and when he does not find any he continues to search,

"Within man and in the depth of the heart" – in all the nooks and crannies, perhaps he will find some iniquity.

implant and engrave in their souls, despite the circumstances, the necessity of being connected with the “tree of life” and fulfilling the Rebbe’s will. Chassidim must carry on sending him *maamud* money, establishing chadarim, strengthening Yeshivas Tomchei T’mimim, and increasing and supporting all aspects of Judaism.

The material situation was terrible, and being involved with any mitzvos was dangerous. Therefore, tough decisions and commitments were necessary at every step of the way. R’ Yisroel said: Since we cannot receive instructions as we used to, we must use our Chassidic imagination and connect to the Rebbe that way.

He suggested that every Chassid imagine that the Rebbe was standing right before him and that the Chassid speak to the Rebbe in his thoughts, ask his questions, tell the Rebbe what was bothering him, and ask for his bracha. When there is inner *hiskashrus*, he said, the Rebbe will hear the question and find a way to respond and bless.

At this farbrengen, R’ Yisroel told a story from which he always derived some lesson or another. He was gifted with the ability to describe something vividly and he knew how to tell a story faithfully, with all the details, so that the listeners felt that the story was taking place right before their eyes. This is the story:

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev had a Chassid who was an expert lumber merchant. He visited forests and marked off which trees were good for paper, which were suitable for construction and which for firewood. One day, this Chassid received an offer from another Chassid of Rabbi Levi Yitzchok. This other Chassid had been given the right, by the government, to cut trees in Siberia and to supply them with raw material, but he wasn’t an expert in lumber and so he wanted the Chassid with expertise to go with him to Siberia. In

exchange for accompanying him on this arduous trip, he promised him a fine salary.

The Chassid who was a lumber expert wondered: But how will I find a minyan three times a day in that forsaken place? The merchant saw no problem with this and agreed to take along ten men, on his account, for a minyan. What about a melamed for my children? The merchant had a

R’ Yisroel wanted to demonstrate to the bachurim how someone who didn’t learn Chassidus fulfilled the mitzva of “ad d’lo yada.” In the town of Lubavitch, there were no Misnagdim, so he took a goat from someone’s yard, gave it mashke to drink, and dragged it to the zal of Tomchei T’mimim as a Purim joke.

solution for that too. He would bring along a melamed, a G-d-fearing Chassid. Where will I find a mikva before davening? The merchant promised to build a mikva.

In short, the merchant gladly promised to fulfill all his requests, one by one, in a generous manner. But the Chassid refused to accept the offer until he spoke with his Rebbe. The man agreed and immediately hired a

wagon and swift horses so the Chassid could reach his Rebbe that very day.

He arrived in Berditchev on Wednesday afternoon and asked to see the Rebbe. R’ Levi Yitzchok, aside from being a leader and Rebbe, served as *rav* of the town. Shabbos was approaching and a woman had come with a question about the *kashrus* of a chicken. The Rebbe was busy with this question and the Chassid was told that as soon as the Rebbe was available, he would be allowed to have a *yechidus* with him, even though it wasn’t the time for *yechidus*.

TREIF! DON’T GO THERE!

What does a Chassid do in the meantime? He sat in awe in the antechamber to the Rebbe’s room and tried to concentrate on the volume in front of him while making a proper spiritual accounting.

The Rebbe’s door was somewhat ajar and he could hear what the Rebbe was saying. To his surprise, he heard the Rebbe addressing the chicken itself! This is what R’ Levi Yitzchok said in Ukrainian Yiddish in which you say “*hin*” for chicken instead of “*hon*” and “*di*” for you instead of “*du*” –

“*Di hin* (you hen), it was so good for you at your owner! He supplied you with all your needs and gave you clean food. It was good but you weren’t satisfied. What did you do? You ran away from your owner, wandered around in the street and rummaged in the garbage to find food. You found a needle and swallowed it and you punctured your gizzard and now you are *treif!*”

When the Chassid heard this, he took his bag, got back into the wagon that was waiting for him and returned to his city. He said that he didn’t need to have a private audience with the Rebbe since he heard the Rebbe’s answer already.

The Chassid, in his great hiskashrus, was sure the Rebbe was referring to him. Firstly, why did the Rebbe speak loudly, if not for me to hear what he was saying? Secondly, why talk to a chicken if not to give me an answer to my question?

It was obvious to me that the Rebbe, with his ruach ha'kodesh, knew that I had come about a job offer and he didn't find it necessary to wait until I told him all the details of my question, and in his words addressed to the chicken he simultaneously paskened her question as well as mine!

I am better off where I am and Hashem has provided me with a dignified way of supporting my family. Why should I travel to distant parts and rummage in the garbage where there is spiritual and physical danger? R' Levi Yitzchok said it was treif! Don't go there!

R' Yisroel Neveler concluded the story: This is an example of a Chassid who is mekushar to his Rebbe! He didn't need a yechidus in order to get an answer to his question. He accepted the Rebbe's answer even though it wasn't said directly to him.

HOLY SENSES

My father also heard the following story from R' Yisroel Neveler:

An antique dealer once offered the Chassid and philanthropist, R' Shmuel Gurary some items that supposedly belonged to the Baal Shem Tov, the Maggid of Mezritch and other Jewish great men. He wasn't sure whether he should buy them or not because he wasn't convinced of their authenticity. He finally decided to buy them regardless, and to give the items to the Rebbe Rashab.

When R' Shmuel Gurary went to Lubavitch he met the Rebbe's son, later to be the Rebbe Rayatz, and told him the story. The Rebbe Rayatz was very eager to see the items and R' Gurary brought them to him. The

R' Yisroel Neveler concluded the story: This is an example of a Chassid who is mekushar to his Rebbe! He didn't need a yechidus in order to get an answer to his question. He accepted the Rebbe's answer even though it wasn't said directly to him.

Rebbe Rayatz took each item, one by one, examined them and then put two aside, without saying anything.

Afterwards, when he went to the Rebbe Rashab, he put everything he had purchased on the table and the Rebbe took each item, one by one, examined them and put the same two items on the side, to indicate that only these two items had belonged to holy men.

R' Shmuel was overcome with excitement to see that the Rebbe's son (the Rebbe Rayatz) had the same

ability to detect holiness. When he left the yechidus, he went to the Rebbe Rayatz and said: I see you have a sense for these things. How is that?

The Rebbe Rayatz explained: Some holiness remains with anything a tzaddik had and therefore, anyone who is sensitive to it can discern it by touching it.

(I heard other versions of this story but this is how my father told me he heard it from R' Yisroel Neveler.)

A CHASSIDISHE THURSDAY NIGHT

My father told me, in the name of R' Yisroel Neveler, that the Rebbe Rashab instructed him not to sleep Thursday night. After all R' Yisroel had suffered during the war years, after they had already left Russia, he was weak and it was very hard for him to stay up the entire night.

He wrote to the Rebbe Rayatz about his health and asked permission, not – Heaven forbid – to sleep, but to nod off a bit while leaning on the table or a bench.

The Rebbe's answer was that since he had gotten this instruction from his father, the Rebbe Rashab, to be awake, then he was given the ability to do so and he should not be lenient in this but should continue to remain awake as before.

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ASCENDING FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF TZFAS

BY OFRA TAMARKIN

The story of Chaya Bracha Leiter, one of the founders of Ascent in Tzfas.

I always loved going to Tzfas, even before I became a baalas t'shuva. It's a city that affords me a sense of calm. There's something about its alleyways, the ancient shuls, the view of Mt. Meron that can be seen from just

about anywhere, the holy gravesites that abound. The soul feels the k'dusha with simple faith and is open to it.

Ascent, which is located in the old

city of Tzfas, is a hostel where an array of spiritual programs are available that enable one to have a hands-on experience with Chassidus and Kabbala. For many tourists to the north, Ascent is home.

During my years of searching, Ascent was a landmark. To tell you the truth, I never entered the place because I felt uncomfortable with what seemed to me the abstraction of holy concepts. Despite this, over the years, I read their ads and I gradually saw that whatever it was that I was seeking is there in full color on their flyers.

They made an offer – come, join us. It's possible and not far-out at all. They showed me that there is a real possibility to connect the worlds. That k'dusha can be really close, within our hearts. It so simple, yet at the time, it was hard to believe.

My meeting with Chaya Bracha Leiter, one of the founders of Ascent, clarified for me how much truth and strength lie behind this enormous project, how much love is invested in it and diffuses outward, like an overflowing spring.

Chaya Bracha, how do you manage to make the connection and



Burial site of Chana and her seven sons on the hillside of Tzfas' historic Old Cemetery

to convey Chassidic concepts to people who are unfamiliar with your world?

Ascent is unique because it provides a hands-on experience. We have learned from experience that seminars concentrated over a few days are very powerful. During these seminars, the participants go through an entire process, which touches them deeply. I take them on nature tours, to the area around Tzfas, which is one-of-a-kind. There is k'dusha here that the neshama opens up to and it can absorb new things.

During the tour, we learn a maamer of the Rebbe and then we do a meditation. I use this word because it's familiar to the participants. It's actually a relaxation exercise, in the course of which I review the maamer. It's an opportunity to internalize what we learned.

I am always amazed by the openness and the questions, and how even before I speak to them about the greatness of Torah and about the Rebbe, they are ready to progress, to hear, and to learn more Chassidus.

Were there times that you were unsure of what you were doing?

Definitely. One of the hard times was before the Kinus HaShluchos 5749. I attended the Kinus in the midst of uncertainty about what we should be doing at Ascent. I was concerned over the fact that most of the programs were mixed (men and women). When I went to the Rebbe for "dollars," I gave him a note with the questions on my mind.

The Rebbe took the letter and looked at it and at me, back and forth, three times, which was unusual. He put the letter on the pile, blessed me with good news and much success and gave me two dollars.

Then we shluchos went to a panel discussion for all the shluchos. The topic was, "Do we water down Judaism when on shlichus?" In a

roundabout way, it dealt with the very topic that was on my mind. A lively discussion ensued in which women expressed their opinions from all over the hall. I felt that they were answering all my questions.

On the one hand, examples came up which underscored the correctness of our approach and showed how successful we are in remaining strong. On the other hand, there were examples that illustrated how much stronger we need to be. I felt like I was being pulled in all directions.

Suddenly, someone sitting behind me yelled, "Just do what they do at Ascent!" and everybody began to applaud. I thought I was going to faint. The entire discussion expressed

The study of Chassidus generates an atmosphere of truth. People sense this and want more, especially those who come from the East.

my inner thoughts and feelings.

I realized that when on shlichus we can't operate simply by judging every issue in terms of permissible and prohibited. I understood that my questions and doubts were legitimate, as well as that there is a time for following your own instincts to judge each situation by who we are talking to and based on this to know how and when to be mekarev him. This Kinus really strengthened us and created clearer inner borders for our shlichus.

Where did the idea for Ascent come from?

My husband, Shaul and I came to Tzfas from Crown Heights after we

got married, in Cheshvan 5739. Tzfas back then was completely different than it is now. They had just begun building Kiryat Chabad and the homes had no electricity or phones. For years, all of us stood on line for the one public phone, which helped strengthened our ties with one another.

Upon our arrival, we began to host American tourists and students who came to visit Tzfas, as well as girls from Machon Alte. Three years later, they asked Rabbi Tilles, Rabbi Vishnfsky, and my husband to start a program for English-speakers that would feed newly minted baalei t'shuva into the yeshiva.

It started with a very small number of talmidim and it took us time until we realized which programs were suitable and what attracted people. The first summer was full. I cooked the food at home and the shiurim were in the nearby shul. What was special about it was that from the very start, the entire community was involved and the participants were hosted by and ate with the families.

This continues today and I wish that all shluchim had this kind of cooperation. It enables you to delegate the work and to reach more of the guests on a personal level.

ESPECIALLY IN THE HOLY CITY OF TZFAS

In 5744, Ascent experienced financial difficulties. The Leiters considered continuing their work in the U.S. They wrote to the Rebbe about this but he gave them a warm bracha that clearly stated that they should continue their work, "especially in the holy city of Tzfas."

Since then, the work at Ascent has grown at a dizzying pace, which necessitated a move to a larger building. In 5751, they bought the building where Ascent is presently located.

Chaya Bracha says that the purchase of the building was supernatural:

We wanted to buy the building but the owner refused. We knew that she had a reputation for torpedoing attempts at buying it. My husband went to the Rebbe to ask for a bracha to buy the building. At dollars, the Rebbe told him to put the dollar in a pushka within the building and gave him a bracha to buy it.

Although it seemed pointless, we began negotiating and in the middle the owner changed her mind, but then her deceased husband came to her in a dream and told her to go on with the sale.

Countless people have passed through Ascent with so many stories. Is there one story in particular that you want to tell us?

“Six years ago an American girl came to Ascent on her way back from India. She wore layers of filthy orange clothes, was barefoot, had numerous earrings and hair that looked like a bird’s nest. It took me some time to get used to her and I kept telling myself to look at her neshama and not at her outward appearance.

“I began talking to her and saw that she was intelligent and refined. She stayed with us for Shabbos, and at the Melaveh Malka meal played her violin. She didn’t know a single Jewish song but she played like an angel. I knew how important it was to be mekarev a person from where they are at.

“She came every so often and each time we taught her something else. One of the times we went to the gravesite of the Arizal as part of one of the programs and I taught her the ‘Niggun Rachamim Rabbim’ composed by Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov.”

* * *

Chaya Bracha taught her note after note of this special niggun, a niggun

that the Baal Shem Tov wanted to be sung for him before he passed away. (The composer, Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zlotchov fasted and afflicted himself for years in order to elevate his soul, and he became gradually weaker. At a relatively older age, when he became a follower of the Baal Shem Tov and wanted to go see him, his physical condition did not enable him to do so and it was with great yearning that he composed this niggun.)

The Baal Shem Tov promised that he would listen to whoever sang the niggun in whatever Spiritual Palace he was in, in the Supernal Worlds, and would ask for great mercy for him.



Rabbi Shaul Leiter

“We sang the niggun together a few times. It was an incredible spiritual experience. When we finished, I gave her a book of T’hillim even though she barely knew how to read Hebrew, and I went back to Ascent. She remained at the gravesite until four in the morning and prayed.

“The next time I met her, I spoke to her about her hair and clothing. I told her sincerely how it concealed her beauty and her femininity. She explained that the clothing had ideological meaning for her, and that it was her way of negating materiality and yearning for spirituality.

“I explained to her that in Judaism the point is to elevate the physical to

k’dusha. She was quiet for a time and then said that the first time she met us at Ascent she felt that she had something important to learn from us, and it was only now that she understood what it was.

“The next time I met her before her marriage to a Breslover, she had had a haircut. We hugged very emotionally.

“I’ve been a part of thousands of stories, step after step, over the years. Each time, I tried to truly meet the person facing me and to get him to take his next step, just as the Rebbe leads us.”

SOMETHING I WAS UNFAMILIAR WITH

Chaya Bracha became interested in religion in 5738 (1977). On Rosh HaShana of that year, she looked for a place to daven, for the first time, and made contact with Lubavitch in Colorado. Not only did they invite her to come, they came to pick her up from her house that was an hour and a half away.

“I was shocked that people I didn’t know had come especially to take me. This was something I was unfamiliar with.”

On Sukkos, she went to shul again and agreed, to her surprise, to an offer to go to Brooklyn, to the Rebbe’s shul. She had no plans on doing t’shuva. She thought she’d stay there a while, visit her grandmother, and return to Colorado to work.

“On Simchas Torah I joined the celebrating but didn’t feel that I belonged. It took me time until I began to absorb the greatness of the Rebbe, and at that time, all the propaganda was suspect to me and I stayed away from it. My hiskashrus came gradually through the sichos I learned. It was through the sichos that I understood the Rebbe’s power.”

The first sicha that Chaya Bracha learned was from Parshas Lech Lecha.

And that is just what she did. She decided to remain in Crown Heights in order to study out of curiosity, but gradually it became more personal to her.

One of the women who made a great impact on her at that time was Mrs. Yehudis Groner, wife of Rabbi Leibel Groner.

“She was a role model for me of a Chassidische woman with faith, who cared about others.”

What was your first encounter with Chabad women?

“Before I joined Chabad I went through a powerful process of understanding my real power as a woman. Before that, I thought that a woman must prove that she can do things like a man. I traveled with a backpack in the Rocky Mts. for days, worked in carpentry, and I gradually understood that to be a woman is simply to know how to give to a family.

“I looked for a place that would fit with the ideas that I had discovered in which I could raise my children. When I met Lubavitcher women, I saw in them that which I sought. At first glance, it was possible to err and to think that they were in second place, but upon deeper contemplation, I realized that this is not at all the case.

“I clearly remember an encounter I had on Simchas Torah with a girl my age. I was so surprised by the combination of innocence and clarity of thinking she exhibited. I realized that you don’t have to fight the world in order to achieve this depth, and that you can achieve it through learning Chassidus and with the support of a large, loving family.”

FREE FLOWING FAMILY TAPESTRY

I watched Chaya Bracha during the hours that we sat together. One by one her children came home and

slipped into the free flowing family tapestry. Some worked on the computer, others sat on the floor and drew, while we continued talking. Every so often, Chaya Bracha – in a very natural way – gave her full attention to the children. I was amazed by her incredible ability to be a mother to eleven children, to teach weekly shiurim for the last 16 years in Rosh Pina and Tzfas, to accompany women giving birth and to make house calls to new mothers, to organize Shabbatons and to be an active part of Ascent.

“The process among those who speak English is slower. They are comfortable with their knowledge and they don’t create revolutions. For the Israelis, on the other hand, t’shuva is like a spark ignited from within which burns immediately into a flame.”

How do you manage to do all these things?!

I work according to the order of priorities that the Rebbe set. First, I am the Akeres HaBayis (mainstay of the home) and mother to our eleven children. The rest of my activities are interposed within the remaining time.

At Ascent, there are times that I am more involved and times that I am less involved. I always help my husband when problems arise at Ascent and with various projects there. This is aside from the fantastic

and dedicated staff, which helps us every day to strengthen and develop our programming.

As someone on shlichus for so many years, what is your advice for shluchos who are just starting out?

The shluchos of today don’t need to start with Alef as they did until now. They can just skip ahead to Tav. People are ready for this. Another important thing, I think, is the ability to convey material in a way and in a language that is suitable for everyone. In order to do this, you need to understand and digest the material really well and to present it in a way that suits the listener without watering it down.

Many years of experience have shown me that what is most effective is teaching Chassidus. Other shiurim can be interesting but they don’t have the same impact. The study of Chassidus generates an atmosphere of truth. People sense this and want more, especially those who come from the East.

What’s your opinion about the kids going off to the Far East?

“I think that it’s a natural part of the process that is taking place here. The Rebbe said that youth can’t tolerate compromise and need the truth. The youth here are surrounded by materialism, which brainwashes them, and only after the army are they ready to mature and begin to ask questions. The Far East follows naturally, as they seek answers to their questions.

“We at Ascent try to show them that what they seek and more can be found within Judaism, right here in Eretz Yisroel.”

Chaya Bracha speaks about the past in terms of the foundation for her work, but it’s the future that burns within her and motivates her and those around her. I got caught up in her dreams for the future too.

“In the beginning, we worked a lot



Rabbi Shaul Leiter with his sons

on advertising to attract people. Today, I feel as though I am standing on a mountain with a wind pushing me from behind. We can barely keep up with the tremendous demand. During the course of a year, about 13,000 people pass through Ascent and we must constantly renew and reinvent ourselves to meet the demand.

“I am passionate about the work we do here. I see that this is what is needed now and we have to provide it, in quality and quantity, and everywhere. Today it’s not enough to have a workshop on niggunim or the study of Kabbala. You have to have a powerful experience in a short time. The modern world is moving so fast

and we have to adjust to the speed. If we don’t work quickly, it will be a great loss.

“After years of experience you can see that the process among those who speak English is slower. They are comfortable with their knowledge and they don’t create revolutions. For the Israelis, on the other hand, t’shuva is like a spark ignited from within which burns immediately into a flame.

“I’ve been dreaming for years about opening a museum that provides a hands-on experiential learning experience of Kabbala, and with Hashem’s help I’ll do it soon. I received brachos from the Rebbe and all the material I’ve gathered is already taking form. This is the current

project which drives me.

What I want to do is illustrate the abstract, spiritual concepts of Kabbala in a pnimiyusdike way and without the technology we will use taking center stage. The message will be conveyed through instruction and through the personal work of the visitors as well as through exhibits that will help explain the ideas.”

A HOMEY ATMOSPHERE

I left Chaya Bracha’s house and went to the old city, to Ascent. Facing me were stairs with lit candles that lead to the downstairs lecture hall. The opening lecture for a weekend program for tourists who visited the Chabad house in Manali, India was taking place.

Rabbi Amram Muell was delivering a dynamic speech in which he himself danced and sang. The crowd, myself included, listened and joined in the niggunim that swept us up higher and higher.

Every so often, I opened my eyes, looked around me and felt the warmth and homey feeling that exudes from every corner. The lecture ended. Behind us, there was a table set with tasty, healthful food. The staff members circulated among us, taking care of everyone, their pleasant presence felt by all.

Slowly, more people showed up, there were emotional reunions, hugs and many smiles. And I saw how everything Chaya Bracha spoke about throughout the day was taking place here.



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SHAI GEFEN

THE TERRIBLE SITUATION IN CHEVRON

The Convergence Government started its first day with the expulsion of Jews from the City of Our Fathers. 1000 soldiers and police were used to throw out three Jewish families from Beit Shapiro in Chevron. Naturally, after the successful operation, they called the mayor of Chevron to happily inform him that they succeeded in throwing Jews off of Jewish property.

It is only in the darkness of Galus among Jews that we have ever witnessed such a thing. The Rebbe expressed his great pain when they brought Jews to expel Jews from Chevron, thus preventing Jewish settlement in the area. History is repeating itself.

And all are quiet! No rav or leader decries this travesty of justice, or denounces this crime in which a Jewish government expels Jews from their homes and gives their homes to Arabs. This has become a routine sight, r"l.

The Rebbe's sichos are full of sharp statements against these despicable deeds. We will quote from some sichos that underscore the severity of these acts. As usual, what the Rebbe said decades ago is relevant right now:

The darkness is so great that something frightful happened. All admit that just as Arabs can buy land in Chevron, so too, Jews can buy land there. All the more so when we're talking about a place which

the Arabs themselves admit belongs to the Jews, like the *shul* which is named after Avrohom Avinu.

But they act in accordance with the Chazal, "one sin leads to another," not only do they want to give an independent civil government to the Arabs in the area of Yehuda-Shomron, despite this being a dangerous thing to do according to all the experts, but they don't even allow the Jews to renovate the Avrohom Avinu Shul!

And they do not allow it because they fear the *goyim* and they are not embarrassed to say so. And they do not want to mix into the Arabs' internal affairs. The Arab simply enjoys this – that they come to him and tap him on the shoulder and say to him: You are our brothers. Elect your own ruler and no one will mix into your affairs! What connection is there between the Avrohom Avinu Shul and the Arabs' internal affairs?! And nobody speaks up about this tremendous descent!

And they don't suffice with that but they take soldiers who dedicate their lives to protecting our holy land and our holy people, and they use this *mesirus nefesh* to remove Jews from Avrohom Avinu's *shul* in Chevron.

Yet, they keep quiet! And the one who does speak up strongly, speaks about other things, and this topic does not interest him.

Then they continue in a way of "one mitzva leads to another mitzva" and they go "from strength to strength," euphemistically speaking. In

addition to the fact that they clear out settlers who settled in areas that were deserted, they also do not allow Jews to renovate the Avrohom Avinu Shul and they clear out those who tried to do so.

We still need to have this explained – when a Jew goes to the M'aras HaMachpella during off-hours, they do not allow him to enter (even though this is not understandable either). Since they established set times for entry, they ought to be obeyed. But here they are doing something shocking – they do not allow Jews to renovate the Avrohom Avinu Shul! And they are doing so [i.e. preventing them] through Jews who have *mesirus nefesh*, who put their lives in danger, in order to defend the shleimus ha'Am and the shleimus ha'Aretz.

The Rebbe, my father-in-law, explains the saying in the Gemara that wealth and its opposite are a "wheel that turns in the world" – when you reach the lowest point, and there is nothing lower, there is no choice but to ascend.

(Sicha Simchas Torah 5739)

And in the sicha of VaYeitzei 5740 the Rebbe said:

Hashem chose Yisroel from among the nations and Eretz Yisroel from all the lands and in a way that it is an eternal inheritance. However, afterwards, "because of our sins we were exiled from our land, and were distanced from our soil." As was said a number of times, the emphasis here is that even when we were "distanced" it

is still our soil! And even when it's a situation of, may Heaven have mercy, "our sins," it is still our land!

This is nowadays, during Galus. And for now, we are far from "is'chalta d'Geula," and we see the descent, may Heaven have mercy, from level to level. We never had such a situation before in which a special meeting is convened of several dozen Jews who speak officially about Chevron, about whether it's a liberated area or a conquered area. And worst of all, the world stands silent!

Thus, the Jews show everyone that they think, may Heaven have mercy, that Chevron does not belong to the Jews. It's just that they accidentally conquered it! And they send delegations who suggest that the Arabs take it back, thereby negating the claim with which they want to fool themselves that the reason for concessions is because of pressure being exerted on them. For it's known that they are suggesting the concessions on their own.

The lesson to learn from this is that even when facing a situation similar to that of the time under the Czar in Russia - then, without looking at what you want, your nature, your chinuch, and at those around you who mock you - a Jew must have the strength to openly say that there is nothing to discuss regarding Chevron! Chevron belongs to Eretz Yisroel within its borders!

Chevron is within Eretz Yisroel and is an essential part of Eretz Yisroel, with all the details herein. And the goyim know this no less than the Jews. As said previously, a few weeks ago the Americans said to the Israeli government representative when he was in Washington: You are giving more than we anticipated!

We must emphasize what we see - the deed belonging to the Mitteler Rebbe still exists, regarding the land in Chevron. This is aside from the deed,

which is the strongest of all, that it is written in the Torah. And this is so not only regarding Chevron.

THE REBBE'S WORDS VERSUS THE CRUMBLING LIES

Since the Six Day War, when the Rebbe received dozens of requests that he send Jews to settle in Chevron, the Rebbe refused to do so. We know this starting with the famous letter that the Rebbe wrote to General Sharon back in 1968 in which the Rebbe asked how would the government react if an argument ensued between Jewish children and Arabs children. Whose side would the military police take?

The Rebbe also wrote this to Rabbi Levinger in 1969. In his letter the Rebbe wrote explicitly that according to the accepted view among government figures, it was clear that they would give back Chevron. "I'm not afraid of the gentiles, G-d forbid, for they are not given free choice, but of our misguided brethren who have free choice."

The Rebbe sent a letter along these lines to Mrs. Geula Cohen in 1981, where he wrote to her that the government's settling the land was political and they had no problem expelling Jews.

In addition to these letters, there are many sichos in which the Rebbe warned that the reason that Kiryat Arba was built near Chevron was expressly to prevent Jews from settling in Chevron.

When I interviewed Rabbi Levinger for *Beis Moshiach* a decade ago, he told me that when he got this letter from the Rebbe he was furious and he ripped up the letter. Today, however, he sees that the Rebbe was 100% right and he asks the Rebbe's forgiveness.

We see how those people who asked the Rebbe to send his Chassidim to Chevron are the ones who gave Chevron to the Arabs and expelled Jews from there. Whoever put their trust in the government, sees how they



*Chevron is within Eretz Yisroel and is an essential part of Eretz Yisroel, with all the details herein. And the goyim know this no less than the Jews. * We must emphasize what we see - the deed belonging to the Mitteler Rebbe still exists, regarding the land in Chevron. This is aside from the deed, which is the strongest of all, that it is written in the Torah. And this is so not only regarding Chevron.*

betrayed them, how the government is willing to send 1000 soldiers to expel 3 families. Their goal is to show the Arabs how Israel is on their side.

To our shame, we still don't learn the lesson. In the sicha quoted earlier, the Rebbe says that the conduct in Chevron irrevocably proves that this is double and redoubled darkness and

not, Heaven forbid, the “is’chalta d’Geula.”

We would have expected from those living in Chevron that after they saw what the ultimate goals of the Zionists are, and their utter hatred for things Jewish to the point that they are ready to fight with mesirus nefesh against Jews, that they would have “disengaged” from this government with the understanding that it represents Exile. And not only an Exile but an exile within an exile. This is not independence but submission to the goy.

A few days before the expulsion we saw the “Independence Day Celebrations” near the field of the Machpella where they explained how holy is political independence and all sorts of rubbish. A few days later the soldiers came, representing those same flags, and expelled Jews.

The Rebbe emphasized in his sichos that the situation in Chevron proves that we are not in “is’chalta d’Geula” but in double darkness and in the darkest galus before the great light.

It’s specifically because we love our dear brothers, the pioneers, who are moser nefesh every day for Eretz Yisroel, that we want to win all the difficult battles we face. In order for this to happen, we must disengage from those false beliefs that have no basis in reality.

The training for the expulsion of Jews from Chevron desecrated the Shabbos, and talmidim from hesder yeshivos were involved. The fact that they consider the government to be the “is’chalta d’Geula” is what leads to all this.

In reaction to the information about the chilul Shabbos in Chevron by the hesder boys, the Matteh Yehudi Lo Megarash Yehudi said, “Unfortunately, we see once again that one who cannot refuse to participate in expelling Jews will end up desecrating the Shabbos, and the yeshivos whose students are involved in this need to

FINAL BORDER STATUS PART 3

One is fully entitled to approach the gentile and say to him in straightforward simple terms [quoting Ethics of the Fathers 5.10]: ‘Possessions belonging to me are mine; possessions belonging to you, are yours’. You have the expanse of the entire world; we have a tiny portion of land which cannot accommodate being populated by the nations [Talmud Tractate Gitin 57.1]. The Torah commentator Rashi [Rabbi Shlomo Izchaki] elaborates in his commentary on the portion Bechukosai [26.32]: ‘That which the verse forewarns ‘The Land of Israel will lie desolate’ [which appears to be a part of the Curses] is actually a blessing. When the Land is made Judenrein of Jews, then, gentiles also are unable to take possession of these areas!’ [Translator’s note: This ancient prediction inscribed in Torah has taken place before our very eyes in Gush Katif, which remains utterly desolate of Arab inhabitants and of production.] They are able only to move around there, but without firm inhabitation, to be there temporarily. But to reside there permanently – this can never be. This is the very nature of the earth of the Land of Israel. Since all of this has already been translated into English in the Bible, the nations of the world are well acquainted with this fact.

The government of Israel sent an emissary, a Jew, to negotiate with a gentile. What does he do? He begins to research non-Jewish sources. Perhaps there he will find proof for Jewish rights to the Land. When he finally is with the gentile and begins to prove that Eretz Israel belongs to the Jewish Nation because Balfour said so, or please, it’s a *rachmanus* [pity] on those poor Jews and such like, the gentile realises that this is not a legitimate legal claim.

The claim must have strong legal justification [recognized also by the gentiles] that the Land of Israel and her borders belong to the Jewish Nation [aside from the greater borders as predicted in the Torah portion R’ei 12.20, ‘When G-d will broaden your borders...’ after the arrival of our righteous Moshiach]. Even if the need be to pay the equivalent of 400 silver shekels, still, the lands are Jewish. The gentile will recognize the truth of this claim, which was not invented in 1948 [with the establishment of the State], but going far back in time to the Revelation at Mount Sinai, and even before to the Covenant with Abraham. Only then will the gentile be freed of the suspicion that if he will grant the Jewish nation one portion, they will not further their demand for a further portion, because the Jewish People are only asking for that which is rightfully his!

The government of Israel makes no effort to release itself from slavery to the international community. They know that their slavery will only end when sinning ends, by Jews returning to their faith. Then, ‘immediately will they be released from their exile’ [Maimonides]. At this time we are still in a state of Exile, not as is the view of those who themselves are mistaken and mislead others [that 1948 was the time when the exile came to an end, and now we have entered the beginning of the Redemption]. Maimonides states clearly that the exile will be prolonged up until the moment when ‘there will arise a king from the royal house of King David, who will draw all of Israel to walk in the footsteps of the Torah that the breaches be repaired. Thereafter he [Moshiach] will fight the wars of G-d and be victorious [all of this he will achieve whilst the Jewish People are still in exile]. Only thereafter will he build the [third] Temple in its rightful place and ‘he will bring about the ingathering of the dispersed ones of Israel.’

This is the great test for us to overcome in our times.

(From a public address 11 Nissan 1976; www.savethelandofisrael.blogspot.com)

clean up house.”

Deep cleaning is definitely needed in order to find out how it was that two days before the expulsion they took those talmidim and poisoned their minds, telling them that the State is the Geula, and when these talmidim receive an order that involves chilul Shabbos, they see before their very eyes “the enactment of redemption and independence.”

Did you expect that those talmidim of the hesder yeshivos would fight against the is'chalta d'Geula? The Rebbe already said in his letter to Rav Zevin that this belief leads to leniencies in Torah and mitzvos.

After what we've gone through in the past year in Eretz Yisroel, tens of thousands of Jews expected a real change, but sadly, it hasn't happened. Many people have sobered up and changed their approach to the State, but most people prefer to deny the reality. It is quite painful but we would be sinning against G-d and against the battle for shleimus ha'Aretz if we didn't say it the way it is.

KOL HA'KAVOD!

A soldier by the name of Sergeant Chananel Dayan, who was being awarded for excellence, refused to shake IDF Lt. General Dan Halutz's hand because his family, three generations, was expelled from Gush Katif. His grandfather passed away shortly after the region was declared closed to non-residents.

Dayan is like the child in the story of the “Emperor's New Clothes” who cries out the truth. And like in the story, a commotion erupted over Dayan's refusal. He was demoted and his cash prize revoked. Meanwhile, Halutz is planning on expelling tens of thousands more Jews!

It's heartwarming though, to see that there are Jews who aren't afraid to stand up for the truth. Dayan made a kiddush Hashem. Perhaps like in the story, once the boy shouted out the truth and everybody agreed with him,

here too people will concede that the situation is utterly absurd.

Dayan should be awarded a prize for heroism, for his small protest against the heavy-handed, draconian state.

IN THE NAME OF THE ONE WHO SAID IT

The following is a quote from a senior journalist, Ofer Shelach of *Yediot Acharonot*, an ardent Leftist who writes the truth about the convergence and about the disengagement:

Ehud Olmert's government is not yet sworn in and yet its spin machine has begun to work overtime. The goal is clear and taken straight out of the pages of Ariel Sharon's workbook: to obtain quiet in the name of the big promise of the future withdrawal from the settlements. Give us two years, and then maybe another little bit and another bit, because in the end you will get the awaited for convergence.

Olmert and company know good and well that the convergence is more a psychological state than a political plan. It expresses the Israeli's desire to escape reality, to put up a wall that reaches the sky, behind which, so we hope, we can hide from the place we live in and from the neighbors, which were forced upon us. It's a natural consequence of the “there is no partner” narrative that was marketed to us aggressively since September 2000. This psychological sense of disengagement from Gaza still holds in the face of the casualties of the Disengagement and despite the fact that most of the prognostications of those who opposed it came true, including Kassams on Ashkelon and the rise of Hamas to power. What does reality have to do with the emotion and feelings of the majority of the people who despised settling the territories and gave up on the possibility of getting rid of them through negotiations.

But the convergence, as opposed to the withdrawal from Gaza, can't be implemented in a way of “wham, bang, the end.” The magnitude of the process under discussion, the numbers of people who will be displaced and the fact that the

area itself is not clearly mapped and bordered like the Gaza Strip, turns it into a difficult plan to implement even under conditions of agreement.

Take just the financial parameter, the system was established already and those removed from the West Bank will not get less than those from Gaza. By simple multiplication, we are talking about a staggering sum in multiples of billions of dollars that is comparable to a quarter or perhaps more than the budget of the State of Israel. There is no way of funding this from independent sources.

It's not so bad, they hint to us. Uncle Sam will pay for it. But nobody has actually asked Uncle Sam whether he agrees. The impudent request, which is very modest relative to the sums they will demand for convergence, to pay for the costs of the disengagement from Gaza, was met with severe criticism from Washington. Over there they don't understand how we can ask the American taxpayer to pay families who are evacuated by their government, a sum that amounts to more than what the family of a soldier who is killed in the line of duty in Iraq for George Bush gets.

Whoever thinks that in the name of the holy convergence, the American wallet will magically open up and Israel will be given an amount equal to that of all the aid Israel has received in the past five or ten years is deluding himself. And that's just the financial end of things. We still haven't spoke about the security aspects and the internal ramifications of the process.

Olmert knows this good and well but he also knows that we are gullible. Most of the people are sick and tired of holding on to the settlements and are ready to do anything if someone promises them to get us out of there. I don't doubt the intentions of the new Prime Minister to go down in history this way but as of now, he has no idea how this will happen. And he is asking us to sit quietly and forget about any other expectations we might have from the government, until he has a chance to think it through, and even after.

A HISTORIC VICTORY: ‘FROM NOW ON THEY MUST CONSIDER THE CHABAD APPROACH REGARDING MIKVAOS’

TRANSLATED BY MICHOEL LEIB DOBRY

On the 28th of Nissan, far from the media spotlights, a historic and most significant victory was recorded in the chambers of the Israeli High Court of Justice, with the acceptance of a petition submitted by a woman from the Chabad community of Petach Tikva regarding the construction of a mikveh “bor al gabei bor,” according to the standards of the Rebbe Rashab. The court established the obligation to give due consideration in such matters, ordering the Petach Tikva chief rabbinate and religious council to renovate the Chabad mikvaos and provide for additional mikvaos according to Chabad standards. In an interview with Beis Moshiach, Attorney Benny Taub, who represented the Chabad community before the High Court, called the court decision an historic victory that gave much satisfaction and nachas to the Rebbe MH”M. Shai Gefen describes the great storm that eventually led to the fulfillment of the Alter Rebbe’s promise of “chassidim with the upper hand.”

Proper Chabad mikvaos, according to the strict “bor al gabei bor” (pit over pit) regulations of the Rebbe Rashab, have been a subject of constant struggle in recent years with the *misnagdish* communities in Eretz Yisroel. These battles have taken place against the will of many who wish to be more stringent by immersing in a mikveh built according to the Rebbe Rashab’s guidelines. As we come ever closer to the True and Complete Redemption, we find that Chabad’s approach in matters of holiness connected with the purity of the Jewish People experiences victory after victory. During dollars distribution, the Rebbe himself would relate to the struggles surrounding the Chabad mikvaos. When HaRav Yisroel Lau served as Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, he told the Rebbe that they had succeeded in securing a Chabad mikveh after much struggle. The Rebbe replied that there is no comparison between a document not brought into question and a document brought into question that was later validated...

In a similar fashion, we see what happened in the battle for the building of a Chabad mikveh in Petach Tikva, which is now on the level of “a document brought into question that was later validated.” The *misnagdim* have been forced to commit themselves to enable the renovation and construction of Chabad mikvaos, as this obligation received the extra-added authority of a ruling by the Israeli High Court of Justice.

Mrs. **Sharon Perlman** of Petach Tikva, who spearheaded this struggle, reveals the story of how this case reached the High Court, as a result of the gross ill-treatment by those who supposedly provide the city's local religious services:

"I moved to Petach Tikva two and a-half years ago, and requested a bracha from the Rebbe on personal matters. The Rebbe replied via *Igros Kodesh* that if I want things to work out, I should be involved in matters pertaining to mikvaos. This was the first answer I received on the subject, and since then for two straight years, I have consistently received answers dealing with the subject of mikvaos. When I once asked the Rebbe what connection I have to public activities regarding mikvaos, the Rebbe answered with a letter to someone who deals with mikvaos, telling him that this is his area of concentration.

"In fact, for a certain period of time, I worked for the Spalter Architects offices in Yerushalayim, which specializes in designing mikvaos, and I also dealt with the architectural side of the subject. Afterwards, I received answers on 'the frightful situation' of the local mikvaos.

"I started making inquiries into the heart of the matter, and soon discovered that after the passing of HaRav Dovid Chanzin, of blessed memory, one of the rabbanim of Petach Tikva, the religious council closed the mikveh on HaMaccabim Street, where there were several pools built forty years ago with Rabbi Chanzin's help, according to Chabad standards. Prior to Rabbi Chanzin's passing, they would not have dared to close the mikveh, but after his passing, they closed the building.

"Furthermore, the religious council administration proclaimed that the mikveh was no longer fit, and the building and design committee decided to sell the property to the highest bidder, with a portion of the profits going towards the erection of other mikvaos in the city. In other words,

eight Chabad immersion pools were about to disappear at one shot. This marked the actual beginning of our struggle with the objective of building additional Chabad mikvaos in town. A special committee was established for this great and lofty project, however, it soon became clear that not only were the local authorities uninterested in assisting us, they would interfere and



drag us along with the intention of tiring us out.

"We organized meeting with the city's chief rabbi, his wife, the mayor – in effect, who didn't we meet with? Everyone explained that they don't care if there will be a Chabad mikveh, but they made it clear that they wouldn't build it. In short, an elegant brush-off. Similarly, we arranged a meeting

between local Chabad representatives and the rav of Petach Tikva, Rabbi Salamon, but to no avail.

"At the advice of my rav, we tried to write three additional letters to the local chief rabbi, explaining the great importance of the matter, but the letters did not elicit a response.

"The constant running around and the affair as a whole proved extremely exhausting. We felt that we had already expended all our efforts. At one point, we came to the realization that there was a spiritual battle going on over the holy and pure matter of a Chabad mikveh. Every person to whom we turned tried to shake us, including very important and respected rabbanim. At a later stage in the battle, we turned to a number of attorneys who had already taken the case, but withdrew at the last minute. There were those who tried to dissuade us from going through with the matter, explaining that we have to understand that there are opponents of Lubavitch out there and we're not allowed raise our heads in protest. However, we continued to act with the strength of the Rebbe, and knowing how vital the matter was to the Redemption and the purity of the Jewish People, we refused to give in.

"At the suggestion of the shliach in Bat Yam, Rabbi Zimroni Tzvik, who is also presently involved in the construction of a Chabad mikveh, we turned to Attorney Avi Taub of Yerushalayim, a Jew who has a very strong connection to the Rebbe MH" M and Chabad (see miracle story article publicized in Issue #375), and he decided to take the case upon himself and deal with the matter.

"We collected the hundreds of signatures required for a Chabad mikveh. At the same time, we began work on our petition, which was submitted (by Divine Providence) on the Rebbe MH" M's birthday, Yud-Alef Nissan. We saw numerous miracles along the way. Down to the day before the petition, we didn't have a penny to pay for the submission of the legal papers. However, in a miraculous

fashion, we had all the money by that Motzaei Shabbos. By Divine Providence, the High Court joined our petition together with a similar hearing on the mikveh in Elkana, being built by the local shliach, Rabbi Yitzchak Koenig.

“The excitement grew when it turned out that the deliberations on our petition would be held on the 28th of Nissan, the day that the Rebbe placed upon us the task of bringing the hisgalus of Moshiach. We were certain of victory.”

Attorney Avi Taub, who represented Chabad at the deliberations, discussed the High Court victory from his legal vantage point:

“A few days prior to the hearing, when the state’s reply reached the High Court, we already understood that they had ‘folded,’ and we saw the start of the victory. They wrote that they have no objection to the renovation of the mikveh on HaMaccabim Street, and a budgetary outlay of one million shekels had even been transferred already for the construction. They had merely hidden the matter from us and had even informed us that they were about to sell the property.

“The case was debated by High Court justices Elyakim Rubenstein, Edmond Levi, and Dorit Beinish. At first, we were very concerned. We had no idea how things would turn out. In a clear and final court decision, the justices ordered the completion of the renovations of the HaMaccabim Street mikveh within a reasonable amount of time. The admissions submitted by the state and local religious council that the mikveh is presently undergoing renovations were accepted as binding.

“The court ruling includes the following explicit clause: ‘We have been informed by the State, the Religious Council, and on behalf of the Mayor that the ‘Maccabim’ mikveh, containing pools according to Chabad standards that have been closed, is presently under renovation, and the State has already transferred a respectable sum of

money for its renovation. There is reason to hope that the renovation will take place and be completed within a reasonable amount of time.’”

What is the meaning of “reasonable amount of time”?

The Religious Council has committed itself to finishing the renovations and opening the mikvaos according to Chabad custom within a few months. From a legal standpoint, “reasonable amount of time” means just that. From this point on, they can no longer drag this matter out indefinitely.

What about the other new mikvaos that they want to build?

Here too, the High Court of Justice issued a clear and unambiguous ruling

We continued to act with the strength of the Rebbe, and knowing how vital the matter was to the Redemption and the purity of the Jewish People, we refused to give in.

that if the petitioner will raise the necessary funds to renovate those currently existing mikvaos according to Chabad standards and the local rabbi gives his halachic approval, another mikveh will be added as requested.

However, the claim has always been that the local rabbi has refused to give his approval so far...

Therefore, the High Court justices ruled in a manner that leaves no room for misinterpretation: “We have recorded in this matter the letter of the 25th of Nissan 5766, from the director-general of the religious council, which states in part that “From the point of view of the chief rabbi, there is nothing to prevent the allotment of an

additional place in accordance with Chabad standards.” In other words, they will be unable to claim in the future that there is a halachic problem on the matter when the director-general of the religious council has already declared that from the point of view of the chief rabbi, there is nothing to prevent the building of a Chabad mikveh.

How would you summarize the High Court’s decision?

First of all, this gave much satisfaction and nachas to the Rebbe MH”M, and for me, that’s everything. Second, we’re talking about an historic court ruling, where the Israeli High Court established categorically that Chabad standards on mikvaos must be given due consideration.

As is known, battles of this type exist in many locations, when there are those who want to limit the pace of Chabad chassidim. As a result of this court decision, I sincerely hope that no municipality will dare to prevent the construction of a Chabad mikveh. Regarding the monetary considerations, there are clear criteria, and thus it will be necessary to add to the building cost accordingly. However, it is quite obvious that if there is a demand, the city officials will be obligated to build a Chabad mikveh. Practically speaking, we have forced the municipalities to make this fact known, and their promise has been transformed into a binding court ruling.

Something outrageous has happened here: Rabbanim and religious council officials sought for years in every possible way to avoid taking the most elementary steps in connection with the fulfillment of halachic mitzvos. Now, we see with wonderment that only after our petition to the High Court was submitted, obligating them to bring clear answers, everyone caved in. I’m not saying that you have to go to the High Court on everything, but regarding this story, we were absolutely compelled to take this step, and we attained an historic achievement.

THE POWER OF A PICTURE

BY MENDEL TZFASMAN

That the Rebbe saves people from tragedies, we all know. That a picture of the Rebbe can draw a person out of the depths of klipa, we've heard about that too. But do we fully appreciate the power of the pictures of the Rebbe that are all over Eretz Yisroel.

An autumn Friday in the north of Israel: Thousands of cars are wending their way homeward, competing to see who can get there one minute sooner. Shabbos was approaching and people didn't want to arrive home at the last minute.

A family car was also making its way home. In it were Refael and Rina Toledano, residents of Yerushalayim. Their son had gotten married the night before in Yerushalayim and the Shabbos Sheva Brachos would be taking place in Kiryat Shmuel, where the kalla's family lived. It had been a difficult week with last-minute preparations for the wedding.

In the car was also Refael's sister, Mrs. Juliet Berdugo, the mother of Yaakov and Moshe Berdugo of Migdal HaEmek. The latter is familiar to many Lubavitchers thanks to the signs he has produced following the Rebbe's instruction to "prepare oneself and the

entire world to greet Moshiach."

It began in the winter of 5752 with a more internally directed initiative, signs that said, "*Heichanu LKabbalas P'nei Moshiach Tzidkeinu*," which were hung on the homes of Lubavitchers in Migdal HaEmek. It may have seemed superficial, but when the Rebbe was given the album of photographs of the signs, he expressed his great satisfaction with it.

Moshe Berdugo:

"As soon as I finished preparing the signs and hanging them up, I photographed the homes of Anash with the signs on them and put the pictures into an album. On the cover I wrote, 'Migdal HaEmek is ready to greet Moshiach Tzidkeinu.'

"When I presented the album to the Rebbe I said, 'Rebbe, in Migdal HaEmek we are preparing for your hisgalus.' The Rebbe took the album with great interest and said, 'Amen,

besuras tovos.' Later on, when the Rebbe went to the Ohel, he took the album with him.

"Still later, Rabbi Yaakov Lebenharz of Kfar Chabad told me that he saw the Rebbe at the Ohel looking at the album with particular attention, examining every picture."

A year went by and there was a new project. Moshe made "*Baruch HaBa Melech HaMoshiach*" signs, which were available throughout the country at low prices. An album of pictures was sent to the Rebbe after Yud Shevat 5753.

The Rebbe's secretary, Rabbi Binyamin Klein gave the album to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe expressed his consent and blessing, and also gave a bottle of mashke for Moshe.

Later on, Binyamin Klein told Moshe that the Rebbe perused the album page by page, nodding his head at every page.

The Rebbe's encouraging answer, along with his strong encouragement of the singing of "Yechi" for a year, spurred Moshe on to continue working until the hisgalus. He produced signs that said, "Yechi Adoneinu..." with a picture of the Rebbe on it. This was a leap forward and it wasn't readily accepted.

Rabbi Yitzchok Goldberg, rosh yeshiva in Migdal HaEmek, asked

Moshe in surprise, "To publicize Moshiach's identity in the streets? A Chassid doesn't do anything without the Rebbe's consent!"

Moshe continued to make more signs but sent faxes to the secretariat with a request for an answer from the Rebbe, but no answer was forthcoming. Moshe didn't despair but continued to "nudge" until he managed to catch Rabbi Groner in a trans-Atlantic conversation.

"We've received your faxes," said Rabbi Groner, "but we have refrained from presenting your request to the Rebbe. Only questions of pikuach nefesh are given to the Rebbe at this time."

Said Moshe, "I pressured him, I argued, I insisted, 'Mivtza Moshiach is the greatest pikuach nefesh today, the pikuach nefesh of the entire generation, which is in a bitter exile and are waiting for the Rebbe's hisgalus,' but all he said was that he'd try.

"I decided not to give up and I asked Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Segal to call the secretaries so that the request would be more official. Rabbi Segal spoke with his brother-in-law, Yisroel Levin, who worked in the office at the time, and the next day at six a.m. I received the Rebbe's answer: *bracha v'hatzlacha*.

"Rabbi Goldberg called me and asked me to come hang one of the signs on his house..."

From then on, till this very day, Moshe Berdugo has produced dozens of "Yechi" signs that grace the walls of Chabad mosdos in Migdal HaEmek and the surrounding areas; billboards paid for by the municipality; plus a wealth of ideas to spread the Besuras HaGeula and the Goel.

Every project of his involves an amazing story or answer from the Rebbe, which perhaps we will relate on another occasion. Now, back to our

story...

* * *

Mrs. Berdugo was exhausted. She wasn't used to long trips and both the traveling and the dancing had taken a lot out of her. She nodded off. Rina did too, while Refael continued driving.

Suddenly, the car veered a bit from the road and went up a rock on the side of the road. Apparently, Refael had also drifted off. He woke up when it was already too late. The car was suddenly thrown into the abyss on the side of the road and began to turn over repeatedly in the air.

Mrs. Berdugo:

"We were near the airport of Kiryat

"We were hysterical as we anticipated the imminent tragedy, but in some inexplicable way we knew that Hashem wouldn't allow it to happen."

Chaim about fifteen minutes from our destination. I woke up when we were in the air. I screamed to Hashem to save us from the tragedy that was taking place. I thought of the chassan and kalla who were waiting for us who had no idea what was actually occurring to us.

"We were hysterical as we anticipated the imminent tragedy, but in some inexplicable way we knew that Hashem wouldn't allow it to happen.

"The car was intercepted by something and stopped with the roof of the car facing downward and the wheels spinning up on top. The windows had cracked and only

miraculously did not shatter. Fortunately, one window was open and we could see the emergency rescue team and Magen Dovid Edom looking at us in astonishment.

"We were extricated, one by one, and we felt ourselves to see what injuries we had sustained.

"It's a miracle!' everybody said in amazement as they looked at the upside down, smashed car and at us, who were just fine. It was clear to us and to the other good Jews who came to help us that Hashem had heard our prayers and had prevented a tragedy from occurring.

"Suddenly, my brother Refael began yelling, 'I don't believe it! Look at what stopped us!' We looked at the wall where the car had stopped and understood everything. From a huge wall that seemed to be planted in the middle of nowhere, the smiling picture of the Rebbe gazed at us under which it said, 'Yechi HaMelech HaMoshiach.'

"We were stunned and strongly felt that the Rebbe had saved our lives. We could think of no other explanation for the incredible miracle we had experienced. We had no time to think because we knew that the new couple was waiting for us in Kiryat Chaim, as well as the kalla's parents and extended family.

"After a brief discussion and when we saw that everyone was fine, we decided to continue on our way. The rescue team thought we were crazy and said, 'You must go to the hospital immediately.' However, we knew that the miracle hadn't happened for us to spend Shabbos at the hospital and we signed a form that said we would go to the hospital on our own Motzaei Shabbos. A kind Jew offered to take us to Kiryat Chaim.

"The participants in that Shabbos Sheva Brachos will never forget that Shabbos. The chassan's father told the story of how he was saved and attributed it to the signs that his nephew Moshe Berdugo created."